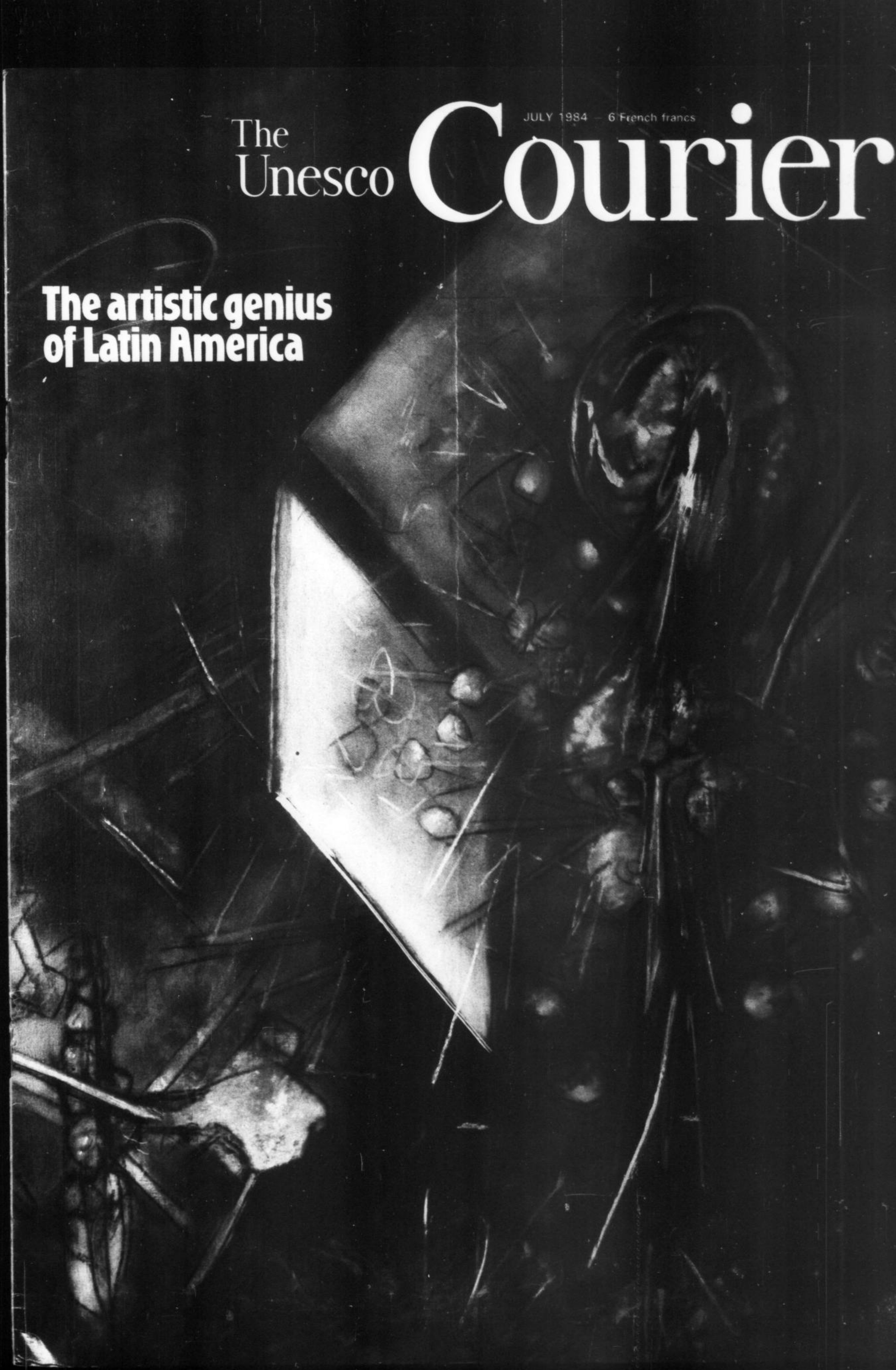
The Unesco Courier

JULY 1984 — 6 French francs

The artistic genius of Latin America



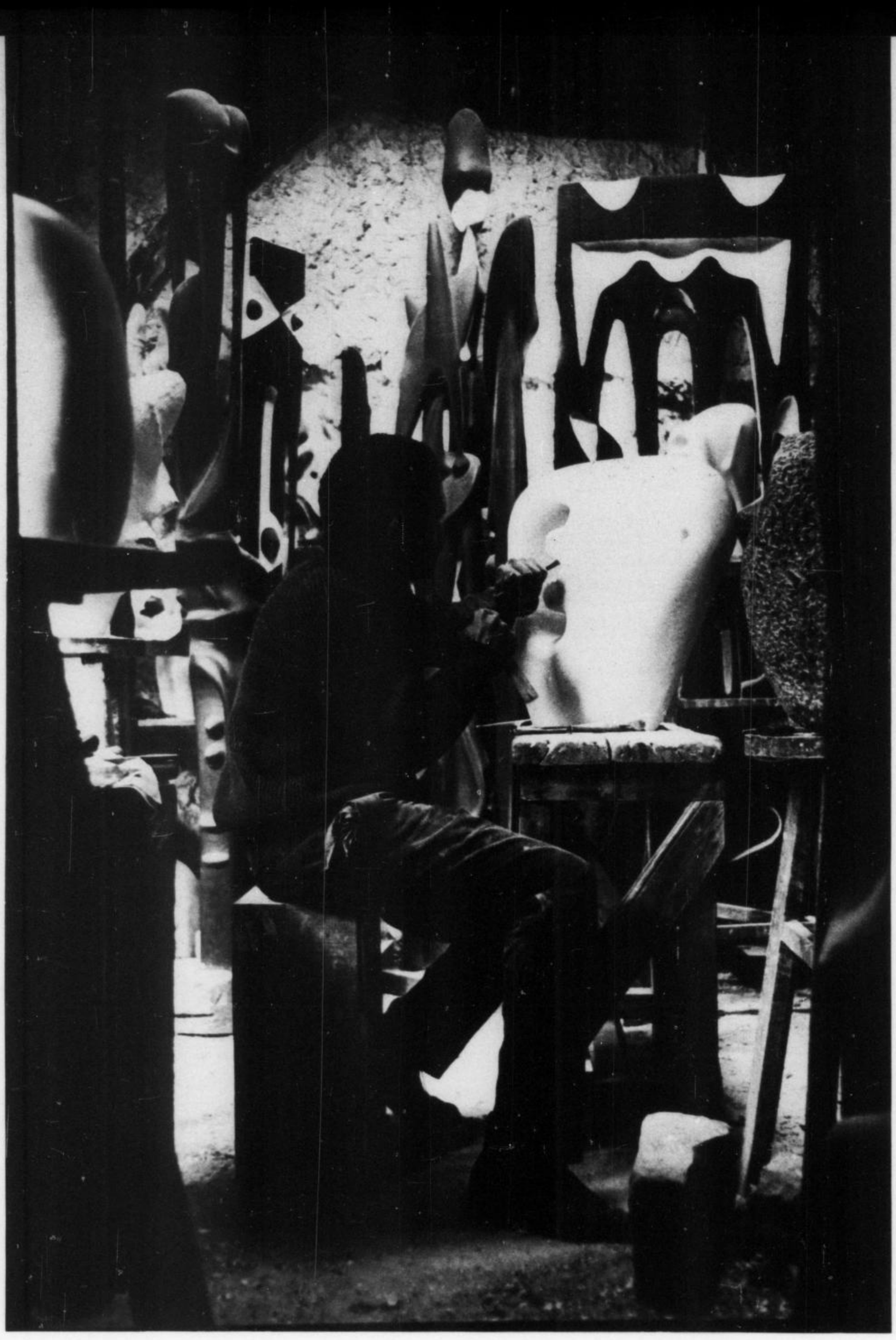


Photo Martine Franck © Magnum, Paris

A time to live...

25 Cuba

The artist in his studio

For the first time our "A time to live..." series features a photo of a known and named artist. This deliberate departure is intended to emphasize the fact that art is an integral part of the life of human communities, not an élitist adventure but a testimony drawn from the deep soul of the people. Both artisan and artist, the Cuban sculptor Agustín Cárdenas works in both wood and marble. Born in 1927, he is today recognized both in his own country and throughout the world as one of the most significant sculptors of our day. Two aspects of his work—graceful totems carved in wood, rounded volumes sculpted from marble and more resistant materials—can be seen in this photo of the artist at work in his studio (1971). As in the paintings of his fellow countryman Wifredo Lam, in Cárdenas' work the memory of the African lineage lives again in the masks and forms, the profusion of vegetation, the rotation of bulbs, the spikiness of thorns, which lie at the heart of the African aesthetic, all this in harmonious marriage with the most recent achievements of the plastic arts. Going beyond the facile vision of what used to be called exoticism, painting and sculpture are thus the contemporary history of our planet—the meeting of cultures and their often fertile symbiosis.

The Unesco Courier
A window open on the world

Editorial

July 1984
37th year

TO attempt a general presentation of the artistic profusion of Latin America in a single issue of our magazine is a challenge that we have accepted with all its attendant risks. It was, for example, imperative to select, in a field in which choosing is bound to be to some extent arbitrary. In making choices we have been guided by the subterranean unity which structures creativity in this region of the world.

At the outset we were helped in our task by the strong presence of the Amerindian peoples. The sense of the vertical, so overwhelming as one descends the twisting road leading to Chavín in Peru and contemplates the landscape rising upright before one's eyes; the propensity for altitude characteristic of the Mayas, the Aztecs and the Incas, which sets aside the fertile stratagems of perspective and gives itself to flatness and unbridled luxuriance of forms; the winding curves of geometrical figures and raw colours which are part of the legacy of pre-Columbian ceramics and carved stone temples: all these elements can be found in the constructivism of the countries of the Rio de la Plata, in Mexican mural art, in the work of such contemporary artists as Gamarra and Botero, and to an extreme degree in the kinetic structures of Soto or Cruz-Díez.

Engrafted onto this Amerindian root are certain influences which originated in the West and have had a decisive impact: the widespread representation of and familiarity with death; the exacerbated conventions of colonial Baroque, which are so outstandingly displayed in the architecture of Old Havana and whose masterpieces of plastic art seem to find a distant echo in the accumulation and density of the painting of Seguí, in the bold architecture of contemporary cities, especially Brasilia, and in the graphic inventions of modern art which Matta has taken so far. In all these fields Latin American artists soon ceased to submit to outside influences and became masters of creation, faithful to the genius of their peoples.

It is not surprising, then, that folk art, both crafts and painting, is so important in this part of the world. The art of the urban *barrios* and rural art, Amerindian art *par excellence,* it is often closely linked to the African influence. Nevertheless, the most striking examples of African influence are to be found in the "natural" painting of Haiti and Brazil, but also in the highly wrought works of a Lam or a Cárdenas.

The basic factor of Latin American art is the mixture of cultures and their dynamism, which is renewed as a result of this very intermingling.

Finally, we regret that lack of space has prevented us from setting our presentation of South American art as fully as we would have wished within the context of the daily life of the peoples to whom it belongs. Above all we regret that we have not been able to cite the many artists, young and still little known beyond the frontiers of their countries, who are today maintaining the continuity and almost boundless fecundity of Latin American art.

Cover: Detail of *The Doubts of Three Worlds,* a mural executed for Unesco's Paris Headquarters (1956) by Roberto Matta (born 1911).

Photo Jean-Claude Bernath © *Unesco Courier*

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The sacred and the profane

Two faces of Meso-American art

by Jacques Soustelle

Photo Jean Mazenod © Editions d'Art Lucien Mazenod, Paris

The Valley of Mexico has yielded a rich harvest of terra-cotta figurines that are probably linked with agrarian cults of the preclassical period (2000 BC - 300 AD) which preceded the rise of the high Meso-American civilizations. This double-headed terra-cotta figurine, dating back to between 2000 and 1000 BC, symbolizes, perhaps, a form of dualism that was deeply rooted in indigenous thought.

OUR Western civilization has broken away from the sacred. For this reason we have difficulty in understanding the art of other cultures that have never ceased to be firmly entrenched in their religious concepts and their view of the world, dominated by the traditional myths.

The notion of "art for art's sake" is foreign to these civilizations. Their plastic arts fulfil a specific function: conjuring up the sacred world, providing the iconography and the material framework that ritual demands, and making visible and palpable the symbols that constitute the esoteric language of religion.

Nevertheless, important though the role of the sacred may be, the profane is not altogether lacking; but its purpose is mainly to glorify the greatness of men, rather than gods, of particular men: leaders in battle, kings, high-ranking priests.

A glance at the remains of pre-Columbian art in Mexico and Central America, that "Meso-America" which for three thousand years was one of the most brilliant centres of world culture, reveals both the predominance of the sacred and the vitality of a "profane area" closely linked to the social and political structures of the autochthonous States.

It should be noted at the outset that our knowledge is limited to only certain of the pre-Columbian arts, though these are admittedly very important and extremely rich: sculpture, whether bas-reliefs or sculpture in the round, the carving of semi-precious stones, murals, the illumination of manuscripts, designs for fabrics and ceramics. The magnificent gold jewels virtually all disappeared in the crucibles of the conquerors. With two or three exceptions the fragile masterpieces of the artists who worked delicately and with infinite patience on the mosaics of multi-coloured feathers were destroyed. Even though we are well acquainted with Indian instruments such as the two-toned *teponaztli*, the flutes and the horns, we know practically nothing about ▶

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Photo © Museum of Anthropology, University of Veracruz, Jalapa, Mexico

Photos Roland © Ziolo, Paris

The most ancient of the Meso-American civilizations was that of the Olmecs, a people who came to prominence around 1000 BC on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Rising like an island, some 4.5 kilometres long, from a sea of marshland, La Venta, in the present-day State of Tabasco, Mexico, was the first centre of the Olmecs, whose language and history are still shrouded in mystery and whose influence extended from the Pacific coast to Guatemala, over a period of some eight centuries. The Olmecs invented a calendar and a form of hieroglyphic writing, but their civilization is characterized above all by stone work and statuary—pyramids, temples, stelae, altars, statues and statuettes—linked to a half-human, half-feline god. The basic themes of Olmec art persisted for fifteen centuries in Meso-American pre-Columbian art in all its variations, from the Aztecs to the Mayas. Photo top left: carved in pale green jadeite and dating from between 500 and 100 BC, this sculpture, 55 cm. high, represents a man, probably a priest, holding in his arms a baby with feline features. It was found at Las Limas in the southern part of the State of Veracruz. Top right, this stela, at La Venta, carved in basalt and known as "The Ambassador", shows a man advancing holding a flag. Above, detail from another stela from La Venta on which can be seen a figure carrying a child, a frequently recurring theme on the altars of this great religious and ceremonial Olmec centre. Even after the decline of the Olmecs their influence continued to be felt in the Oaxaca region, as can be seen, left, in this terra-cotta masterpiece from Cuilapán, known as "The Scribe".

▶ Indian music, and are completely in the dark regarding its melodies and rhythms: the music that came over from Europe engulfed everything.

Can the first tentative experiments of the so-called "pre-classical" period be called art? Indeed they can, for this "archaic horizon" as it is often termed, corresponds to the beginnings of agriculture and of the peasant cults of the second millennium BC, and its characteristics are recognizable more or less everywhere from Central Mexico to Costa Rica. Terra-cotta figurines predominate; they are very frequently feminine figures that evoke our prehistoric European "Venuses", with their ample forms. They are probably minor deities of the land, who were expected to make the soil fertile and the harvests good. The Valley of Mexico is particularly rich in figurines of this kind.

This whole "pre-classical" period forms an introduction to what were to be the essentials: the high Meso-American civilizations. The story starts somewhere around 1200 BC with the most ancient of them, the Olmec civilization which for eight centuries was to shed its brilliance over a region extending from the coast of the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific and Guatemala. It was among the Olmecs, about whom we still know very little, that took shape the characteristic traits of Meso-America which were in evidence right up to the time of the Aztecs, nearly three thousand years later: the paramount importance of the ceremonial centres and consequently of sacred art, the predominance of sculpture and carving, stelae with bas-reliefs and monolithic altars. The first elements of hieroglyphic script and of the complex calendar of Meso-America also date back to the time of the Olmecs.

The most striking aspect of the art of the Olmecs is their stone statuary. From the beginning it dealt with the two major themes mentioned earlier: the world of the gods and the world of man. The first theme, to give a few examples, includes the altars of La Venta and of San Lorenzo whose bas-reliefs show figures, gods or priests, bearing in their arms a strange half-human, half-feline child; the goddess of rain and of good harvests displayed at Chalcatzingo; the "baby jaguar" of Las Limas, a masterly jade statuette, and the "were-jaguars" of the Bliss Collection in the Dumbarton Oaks Museum in Washington, D.C.

The theme of statesmen, chiefs and ambassadors, is magnificently interpreted: the colossal heads that characterize Olmec culture would appear to be portraits. They have individual traits and the helmets they wear are decorated with glyphs—no doubt the names or the titles of these great men. At La Venta, the famous stela known as

Photo © Claude F. Baudez, Paris

Copán, in present-day Honduras, was one of the great religious centres of the Maya civilization of the classical period (300-900 AD). Copán is famous for its sculptures in the round and its magnificent stelae. This grotesque-style head is a detail from a sculpture which is probably a representation of the god of storms. He carries a torch on which is carved the glyph of water.

"The Ambassador" tells of a historic fact: the advancing man waving a flag is accompanied by four hieroglyphic signs. Even more celebrated is the "Uncle Sam" stela, whose bas-reliefs show a "confrontation" between a typical round-faced Olmec, and an individual with angular traits: could it be a political meeting between two chiefs of different ethnic origins?

Thus as early as the first millennium BC, Meso-American arts had assumed what was essentially their definitive shape. This obviously does not mean that they remained immutable and similar to one another during the whole period up to the Spanish Conquest. Far from it! Each civilization and each province developed its own styles. However it cannot be denied that they all share a "family resemblance". Whereas the Olmec statuette, the Mayan bas-relief, the painting of Teotihuacán or the Aztec statue are all recognizable as such at the first glance, all these works taken together are closer to each other than those left behind by the Andean civilizations from the Chavín to the Tiahuanaco and the Mochica to the Incas.

From the viewpoint of the plastic arts, the history of Meso-America after the Olmecs may be said to have two major phases: the classical period, from the end of the first millennium BC and the beginning of the Christian era up to the tenth century, and the post-classical period from the year 1000 to the beginning of the sixteenth century. The first phase encompasses the art of Teotihuacán, of the "classical" Mayas, Monte-Albán and Oaxaca, as well as that of the Gulf of Mexico (Veracruz). The second includes the recent Mayas (Yucatán), the Toltecs, the Mixtec culture of the Oaxaca mountains, and that known as "Mixteca-Puebla" which developed between the Oaxaca mountains and the plain of Cholula and Tlaxcala, and finally the imperial civilization of the Aztecs.

Classical Mayan art, as it is to be found in the metropolises such as Tikal, Palenque, Yaxchilán, Copán and which was at its height between the sixth and eighth centuries, can no doubt be considered the apogee of American indigenous aesthetics. Whether we consider the major bas-reliefs such as those of Palenque (Panel of Slaves, sarcophagus of the Temple of Inscriptions), the stelae of Tikal and Copán, the lintels and panels of Yaxchilán, or the precious objects discovered in the tombs, such as jade jewellery, engraved bones, or inscriptions in elegant lettering similar to arabesques, the Mayan style compels recognition through its unique combination of power and grace. Gods, priests and mythological or ritual scenes usually predominate, but in Yaxchilán and Piedras Negras admirable bas-reliefs recount the dynastic history of the towns and exalt the glory of the kings. At Bonampak the rare frescoes that escaped destruction as a result of the corrosive effect of the climate depict life in a medium-sized Mayan principality, the ceremonies and dances, the orchestras and noblewomen, as well as violent scenes in which proud warriors clad in jaguar pelts and crowns of plumes play the leading roles.

The embellishments painted on the polychrome vases of the high period also tell us something about the classical Mayas, their clothes and their ornaments, such as the famous vase of Nebaj (in the British Museum).

The Teotihuacán civilization on the high central plateau was contemporary with the classical Mayas and kept up steady relations with them despite the great distances separating them. Yet Teotihuacán art remained profoundly original. Its sculpture was in the main secondary to its austere and grandiose architecture: thus, for instance, the magnificent temple of the Plumed Serpent, in the gigantic complex of the "Citadel", is decorated with low and high reliefs of the gods of rain and of vegetation. Similarly, beautiful sculptures adorn the columns of the recently discovered "Palace of the Plumed Butterfly" *(Quetzalpapalotl)*. A statue, or rather a sculptured slab of monumental dimensions, now in the Museum of Mexico City, portrays a water goddess. Yet Teotihuacán art is first and foremost the mural. This sacred art, which is displayed in splendour on the walls of the edifices of Atetelco and Tepantitla, presents the gods, the priests, the rites and sometimes the faithful and the blessed in Paradise. The face of the god of life-giving rain appears as an almost obsessional motif not only on the painted walls but also on the ceramics, which are also painted in fresco, a technique that was very characteristic of this civilization.

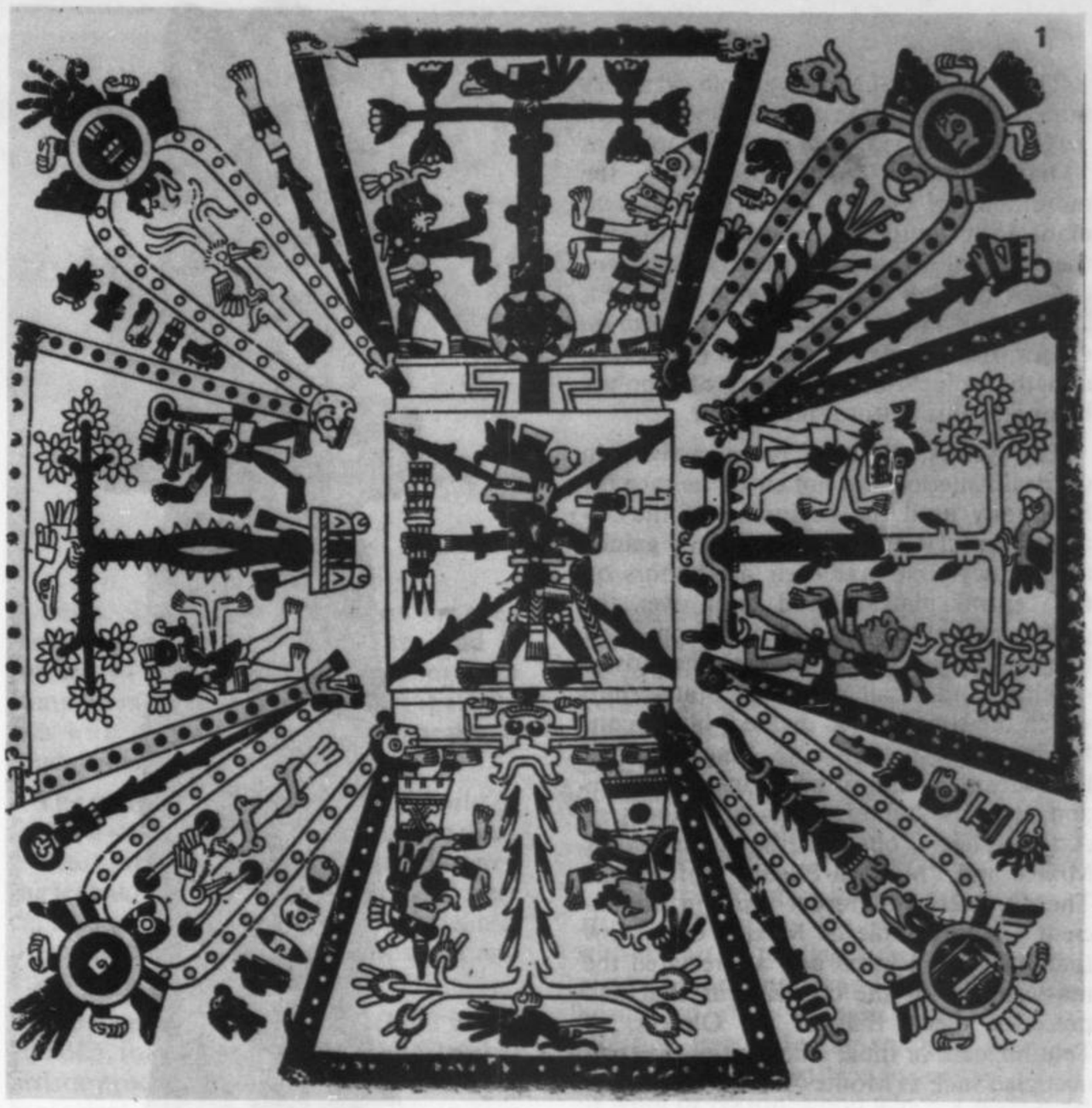

Photo © *Musée de l'Homme*, Paris

The ancient peoples of Mexico and central America wrote on stone, hide and paper. Their writing was a combination of pictographic, ideographic and phonetic elements. Right, part of the Fejervary-Mayer Codex, showing the four directions of the universe. The Codex is inscribed on buckskin and is of Mixtec origin. The Mixtecs were an ancient people whose civilization (1200-1521) had great artistic influence. The upper part of the Codex represents the "side of light"; the lower part is the "women's side"; to the right is the "side of the dead"; and to the left is the "side of thorns", associated with the god of rain. The god of fire is depicted in the centre.

Finally, the artists of Teotihuacán revived and brought to the highest degree of perfection an art form that had been outlined by the Olmecs: the portrayal of the human face. These were no longer colossal heads but funeral masks made from a hard gemstone, and often inlaid with turquoise, jade and mother-of-pearl, which were carved and polished.

If one were to summarize in a few words the art of the classical period in Oaxaca and the Gulf region, it would be possible to resort to schematic formulations: with regard to the Zapotec art of Monte-Albán, Mitla, Yagul, Monte Negro and other sites in Oaxaca, the predominant form is assuredly ceramics, modelled terra-cotta for depicting the gods and sometimes human beings, as in the case of the extremely beautiful statuette of the "scribe"; but the murals displayed in the funeral rooms cannot be overlooked. Regarding the coastal area in the present-day State of Veracruz, the most distinctive trait is the sculpture, the religious bas-reliefs at El Tajín and above all the enigmatic objects relating to the ritual ball game, known as "yokes" and "palamate stones", with their sophisticated workmanship and great plastic beauty. However, the terra-cotta statuettes and statues (some of which are nearly two metres in height) which represent either divinities or else priests or warriors, are no less original.

Teotihuacán appears to have succumbed to an assault from outside or to an internal convulsion in the seventh century, and, at the beginning of the tenth century, building, sculpting and painting came to a halt in the Mayan cities. Indeed, towards the end of the first millennium AD, the classical world was showing clear signs of fatigue. Nevertheless, certain urban centres escaped, so to speak, from the general crisis. This was certainly the case with regard to Xochicalco, on the western slopes of the high plateau, with its beautiful, typically Mayan bas-reliefs and its hieroglyphics in the style of Monte-Albán. Similarly, at the foot of the volcanoes situated on the Puebla plateau, the admirable and recently uncovered Cacaxtla frescoes reflect the mythological conceptions of a population that probably originated from the Gulf area and was under Mayan influence, while certain panels recount battle scenes and war exploits.

Be that as it may, the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries witnessed the opening of Mexico to large-scale migratory population movements. The nomadic and warlike peoples of the northern steppes streamed in successive waves towards the central plateau. Some of them pressed forward to Yucatán and Guatemala. The great city of Tula, founded in the ninth century, took over part of the heritage of Teotihuacán, but the newcomers brought with them cosmological conceptions and rites, particularly human sacrifice and the doctrine of cosmic war, which were reflected in art. In Tula, the caryatids supporting the roof of the great temple are enormous statues of warriors standing stiffly under the weight of their weapons, and wearing rigid crowns made from eagle feathers. The bas-reliefs have as their themes processions or military marches, and eagles and jaguars devouring human hearts. Macabre sculptures adorn the *tzompantli*, where the skulls of the sacrificial victims were piled up. The Plumed Serpent, formerly interpreted in Teotihuacán as being the benevolent divinity of agricultural plenty, became in Tula a god of the Morning Star, the archer-god with the fearsome arrows.

Imposing and austere, Toltec art was the reflection of a society dedicated to the study of the stars and to war. Transposed to Yucatán where it was engrafted onto Mayan tradition, it evolved, became more flexible and elegant, juxtaposed Mayan motifs, such as the god of rain *Chac*, and Toltec divinities, and blossomed into the grandiose architecture of the Temple of Warriors and the *tlachtli* court (a ceremonial ball game) at Chichén-Itzá. This hybrid art form was to enjoy two centuries of dazzling brilliance. We owe it not only the beautiful sculptures of the monuments, but also interesting murals and magnificent carvings, gold discs engraved with Toltec motifs (for instance, scenes of human sacrifice) with truly Mayan mastery.

In Oaxaca, the Mixtec mountain tribes increased their pressure on the valleys and by the eleventh century forced the Zapotecs to move eastwards, in the direction of Tehuantepec. Once they had become the masters of Monte-Albán and Mitla, the Mixtecs developed their own particular style in art which reached its peak in the creations of their goldsmiths and in the illumination of manuscripts. The gold and turquoise jewels discovered in the Mixtec tombs arouse our admiration. Although intended primarily as ornaments, they are often of a religious or cosmological nature: a pectoral has the symbols of the earth, the sun and the cosmic *tlachtli* court; another shows the god Xipe Totec; yet another a conversion table for the Zapotec and Mixtec calendars. Mixtec manuscripts or *codices*, with their polychrome illuminations and their pictographs, constitute a veritable illustrated encyclopaedia, reflecting religious beliefs and rites and the history of the aboriginal dynasties and certain national heroes such as the legendary chief "8-Deer". The style and colour range of the illuminations, as well as the symbols linked to the ritual calendar, are also found ▶ in the murals.

▶ The influence of Mixtec art played a very important role in the artistic development of Central Mexico. The culture known as "Mixteca-Puebla" developed from the mountains of Oaxaca up to Cholula and made a substantial contribution to forming the art of the valley of Mexico. Religious codices of high aesthetic value and great ideological interest such as the *Borgia Codex*, the frescoes of Tizatlán (Tlaxcala), and the polychrome ceramics of Cholula belong to this cultural movement.

The Aztecs, the most recent arrivals in Central America, did not enter the race for hegemony until the beginning of the fifteenth century. Having very rapidly gained ascendancy first over their neighbours on the central plateau, and then over the greater part of Mexican territory from coast to coast, they began assembling the mosaic of cities and small and large States, into which the country was divided, into a confederation. At the same time they set themselves the aim of achieving a religious and artistic synthesis. The main roots of Aztec art lie in Toltec tradition tempered by Mixtec and "Mixteca-Puebla" influences. The discoveries of recent years in the ancient Great Temple of Mexico City show that the Aztecs knew and appreciated the masterpieces of the civilizations that had preceded them: that of the Olmecs, of Teotihuacán, or those whose cities they had occupied such as Monte-Albán. Aztec art is thus an imperial art, that of a State attempting to absorb and restructure the heritage of an immense group of diverse peoples.

Although much of it was destroyed, Aztec sculpture left behind innumerable proofs of its technical perfection and the power of its symbolism. Once again religious and cosmological themes predominate: the monumental and overwhelmingly symbolic statue of the earth goddess Coatlicué; the stone disc depicting the moon divinity Coyolxauhqui; the gigantic Aztec calendar that sums up a whole view of the world and of time: the Cihuateteo, the macabre and grimacing company of deified women and demons of the twilight; the benevolent Tlaloc, the god of rain, and Xochipilli, god of youth and flowers. Countless examples remain of these impeccably worked representations of the gods which caused their contemporaries to say that the Aztecs were "the most pious of men". However, profane subjects were not forgotten. The famous "Stone of Tizoc", with its bas-reliefs glorifies the exploits of the emperor of that name—imaginary exploits, since according to the chronicles, this sovereign was not in truth the valorous warrior his propaganda would have us believe. There are numerous sober yet touching statues of *maceualli* (men of the people) as well as many sculptures depicting plants and animals, shaggy coyotes and insects. Less flamboyant than those of the Mayas, less rigid than those of the Toltecs, the art forms which flourished in Tenochtitlán when Cortés and his companions in adventure arrived there in the fateful year 1519 were the reflection both of a long tradition and of profound creative sensitivity.

The "minor" arts—goldwork, jewellery, stone-carving and featherwork—were greatly appreciated by the Aztecs and the rare examples preserved today in museums give us a tantalizing glimpse of the perfection they must have attained. Was not Quetzalcoatl, the benevolent Plumed Serpent, the civilizing hero and inventor of writing and of the calendar, the protector of artists *par excellence?*

■ **Jacques Soustelle**

Photo Jean Mazenod © Editions d'Art Lucien Mazenod, Paris

The powerful, all-conquering Aztecs founded their capital, Tenochtitlán (Mexico City) in the 14th century. Their civilization attained a high degree of development before its brutal destruction by Cortés and his conquistadores at the beginning of the 16th century. The themes of their statuary were mostly religious or cosmological. Above, statuette (68 cm. high) of the benevolent god of rain, Tlaloc, carved in andesite and found in the region of Mexico City.

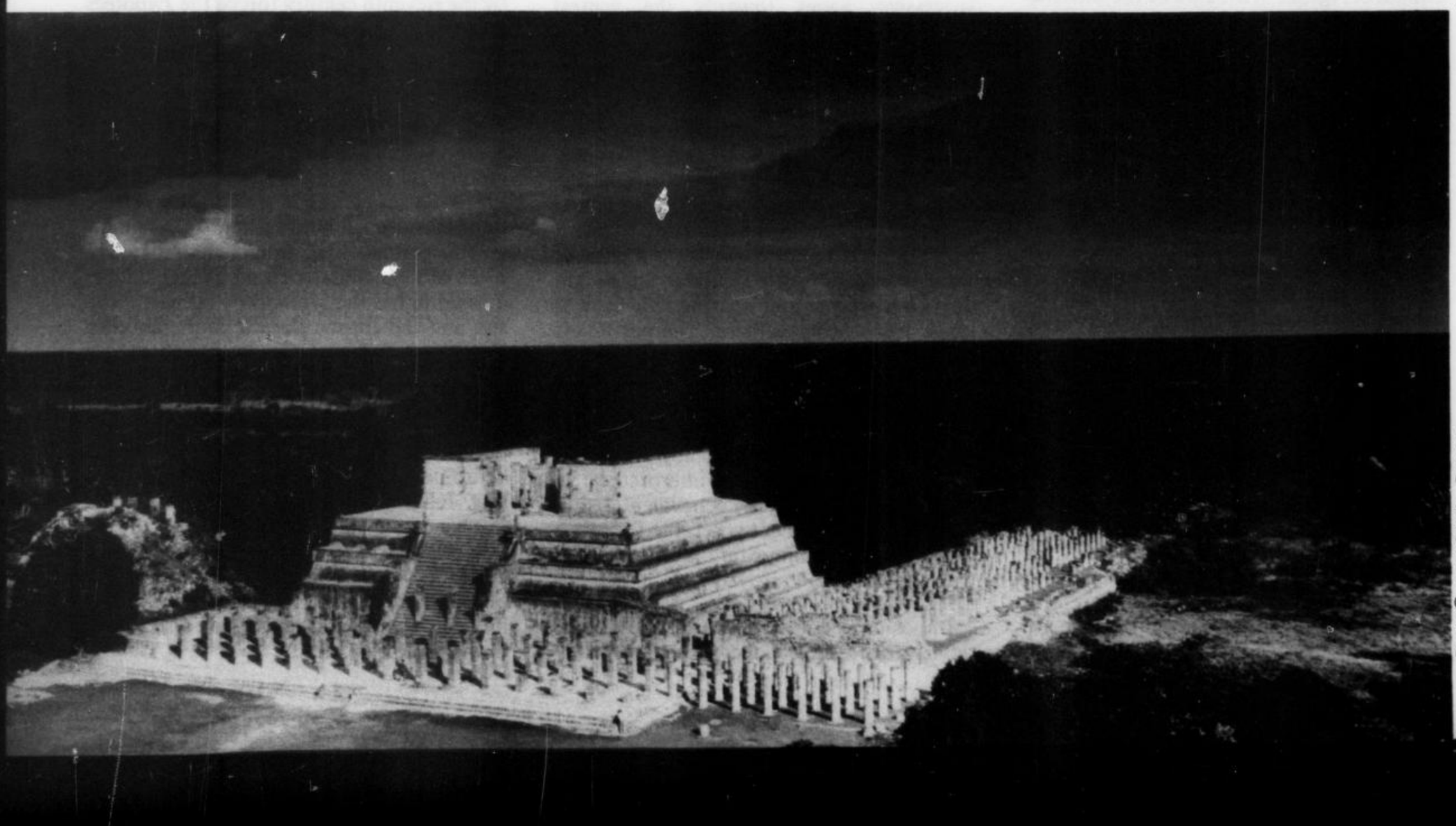

Photo © Henri Stierlin, Geneva

After a long period of eclipse, the Maya civilization experienced a veritable renaissance from the end of the 10th century, when the Toltecs arrived in the Yucatán peninsula, to the 16th century. The sacred city of Chichén Itzá is a fine example of the marriage of Maya techniques with the art of the Toltec invaders. Below, the "Temple of the Warriors" at Chichén Itzá. The forest of pillars to the right of the temple once supported a corbelled vault roof—a specifically Maya technique—which rested on wooden lintels. The roofing finally collapsed when the lintels rotted. This vast hypostyle hall, known as the "Thousand Columns" was an architectural triumph covering a surface area of over 1,300 square metres.

A LABYRINTH OF FORMS

The pre-Hispanic culture of Peru

by Jesús F. García Ruiz

WHEN one enters the world of the arts and creations of pre-Hispanic Andean societies, one fact become immediately evident; although the creative artists of these different cultures employed similar techniques and materials, each society excelled in its mastery and perfection of form in only one of the various branches of creative activity.

The craftsmen of Chavín had no equals when it came to expression in stone; those of Paracas used the distaff and spindle to create original forms in textiles; the Nazcas and Mochicas modelled the most beautiful ceramics; the craftsmen of Tiahuanaco introduced the monolithic architecture which would later be developed by the Incas; no one equalled the Chimús in the art of feather-work and in metalwork. The Incas synthesized the various branches of creative art by incorporating into their empire the artists whom they found throughout the length and breadth of the territories they conquered or subjected. It is from this specificity and variety that the art of the Andes derives its importance.

The world of forms reflects an astonishing level of artistic maturity in Chavín de Huantar (1500 BC to 400 BC). The techniques and materials used vary, but it is in bas-relief stone carving that exceptional perfection of form is displayed.

Like their contemporaries the Olmecs of Central America, the artists of Chavín succeeded in mastering stone and imprinting upon it complex meanings through a labyrinth of forms. The genius of these artists can be appreciated at its best in bas-reliefs such as those at El Lanzón, the Raimondi and Yauya stelae, the obelisk at Chavín or the warriors of Cerro Sechín, where we can admire the genius of these artists at its greatest. The theme is a symbolic group embodying the anthropomorphization of the jaguar associated with the serpent, the condor and the fish. At El Lanzón, for instance, the figure is depicted in a standing, forward-facing position. The head clearly indicates the symbiosis of feline characteristics—fangs, claws, eyes and maw. The body, like the extremities, is reduced in size and the hair is in the form of serpents. The Yauya stela bears an even more striking composition. The head is formed of two feline faces meeting in a common mouth, while the body is that of a fish with its gills and dorsal, ventral and caudal fins.

The underlying meaning of this world of forms is still to be discovered. But one thing is clear: the artists of Chavín had mastered the technique of working in stone and were capable of imprinting upon it an indelible, permanent testimony of their wisdom and knowledge.

The civilization of Paracas (1100 BC to 200 BC), for its part, attained a high level of artistic production in textiles. Thanks to the ecological conditions prevailing in the region, specimens have come down to us in a perfect state of preservation. They include many burial *fardos* (bales or bundles), with the offerings and the cloths in which they were wrapped. Amongst the many items discovered—ceramics with decorations incised after baking, fire-engraved vessels, obsidian knives, cotton netting and gauze—the painted cloths and cotton and woollen embroidery are especially striking.

For archaeologists and art historians the artists of Paracas will always be associated with the art of textiles because of the complexity of their motifs and the harmony and beauty of their colours. The most interesting items are the so-called *mantos*. The base of the textile is formed of a weft of wool or cotton, upon which a multitude of motifs are embroidered—jaguars similar to the Chavín stylizations, bicephalous condors, reptiles, fishes, birds, hands grasping obsidian knives, severed heads. All these motifs are worked with great freedom of form. The attention is especially attracted by the wealth of ornamentation, the movement given to the forms, the constant balance of colours. The colouring has retained all its freshness and intensity.

While it is true that pottery techniques attained high levels of artistic maturity amongst the ceramists of Chavín, the highest artistic levels were achieved by the Nazcas (200 BC to 600 AD), and the Mochicas (200 BC to 700 AD).

The Nazca ceramist was also a master of forms and of polychrome painting. The archetype of his creativity is the semi-globular pitcher with two cylindrical beaks placed vertically and joined by a bridge neck. The potter's wheel was not used in America. Ceramists used the technique of the rolled clay "snake", which was first fixed at the base and then stretched to form the walls of ▶

Photo Jean Mazenod © Editions d'Art Lucien Mazenod, Paris

The oldest culture of Peru takes its name from the archaeological site of Chavín de Huantar in the country's northern highlands. Between 700 and 300 BC the influence of the Chavín culture spread throughout the central Andes. Chavín stone carving, perhaps the most beautiful in South America, is inspired by a religion based on the worship of a feline god. The site itself, extending over some 12,000 square metres, consists of a complex of massive constructions. Nearby, a number of carved stone blocks, which may originally have been decorative elements, have been found. One of the most famous is the diorite Raimondi Stone, left, which stands 1.95 metres high and dates from 1200-600 BC. This strange semi-human figure, holding a long ceremonial staff in each hand, displays the combination of interwoven human and animal forms which is characteristic of Chavín art.

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Photo © Henri Stierlin, Geneva

The influence of Chavín art is reflected in that of the Cupisnique culture which flourished on the northern coast of Peru from around 850 to 300 BC. Cupisnique craftsmen produced outstandingly beautiful brown and black pottery with curves and whorls in decorative patterns in which the feline motif predominates. Left, black ceramic stirrup vase from the Cupisnique region (c. 850-600 BC).

The Mochica culture associated with Moche, the valley on the northern coast of Peru where its most important remains have been found, flourished from the 2nd to the 8th century AD and is noted for its remarkable ceramics evoking aspects of everyday life. Below, polychrome terra-cotta vase-effigy (600 AD, height 32.5 cm). The forehead is framed by two birds (only one of the wings is visible in photo).

▶ the vessel. When this initial stage had been completed a coating of fine sand was applied to protect the object during baking. Afterwards it was polished to obtain the smooth, brilliant surface which would serve as a basis for the pictorial decoration.

It was in this final stage of painting that the Nazca artists excelled in the creation of unique forms. Their mastery of abstract art attained such a level that even today we are amazed by the imaginative power displayed in their designs. Some pieces contain as many as eleven colours, not counting blended colours. The motifs used are sometimes similar to those found in the textiles of Paracas. They consist of anthropomorphic figures framed by geometrical patterns. The central figures are overlapped by real beings from the animal and vegetable worlds, everyday objects and utensils.

Apart from their paintings, the ceramics of the Mochicas achieved a level not attained by other cultures. They introduced a sculptural dimension into the modelling of clay. Unlike the Nazcas, the Mochicas were completely true to life. Both in painted scenes and in the sculptured forms given to clay the dominant theme is that of daily

life—banquets, official ceremonies, dwellings and their surroundings, flute-players, drummers, dancers, hunting, fishing, warfare.

But it is in the *huacos-retratos* that this lifelike quality is most apparent. This term is applied to a certain kind of object in pottery which is an exact reproduction of the human head, with the various expressions that can appear on the human face. These expressions are so true to life that some people believe them to be genuine portraits of historical personalities. These *huacos-retratos* provide us with a mass of information of the greatest value, unique in American ceramics. They are veritable historico-ethnographical documents, supplying information about systems of decoration, face-painting, possible facial deformation, varieties of human expression, and so on.

This realistic art includes ceramics of erotic inspiration. The many examples extant include all the possible forms, variants and expressions of sexual life. The Mochica artist was capable of capturing and reproducing them with all the unmistakable veracity of his powers of observation.

The Chimú civilization (1000 AD to 1470 AD) is notable for the quality of its work in feathers and gold. Like the Aztecs in Central America, the Chimús used feathers to clothe and adorn themselves. The feathers were placed overlapped on a textile base of cotton or fibres, the end of each feather being folded and fastened with knots of various kinds. Cloaks made in this manner became a part of the ceremonial wardrobe. They were not only beautiful but waterproof.

We are also indebted to the Chimús for specimens of the goldsmith's art which are amongst the finest and most perfect of the pre-Hispanic world. They mastered the techniques of smelting and welding, the lost wax process, beating out leaf metal, gilding, plating and the manufacture of alloys. Tempering was achieved by cold hammering, repoussé-work by hammering the metal sheet on wooden moulds. With moulds they made masks, ceremonial vessels and knives, and all kinds of jewels.

There are many proofs of the artistic skill of the Chimús. Here is what the Spanish historian Juan de Torquemada wrote in 1613: "They were very skilful in the arts of ▶

Photo © Henri Stierlin, Geneva

The Chimú were outstandingly accomplished metallurgists, and the funerary masks, sacrificial knives, ornaments, breastplates, and decorative architectural elements which they made in precious metals were largely instrumental in inspiring the myth of Peruvian gold, the Eldorado which bewitched the Conquistadores. Above, ceremonial knife in copper, gold and turquoise (length 40.5 cm) is from Illima in the valley of Lambayeque and dates from 1100-1400.

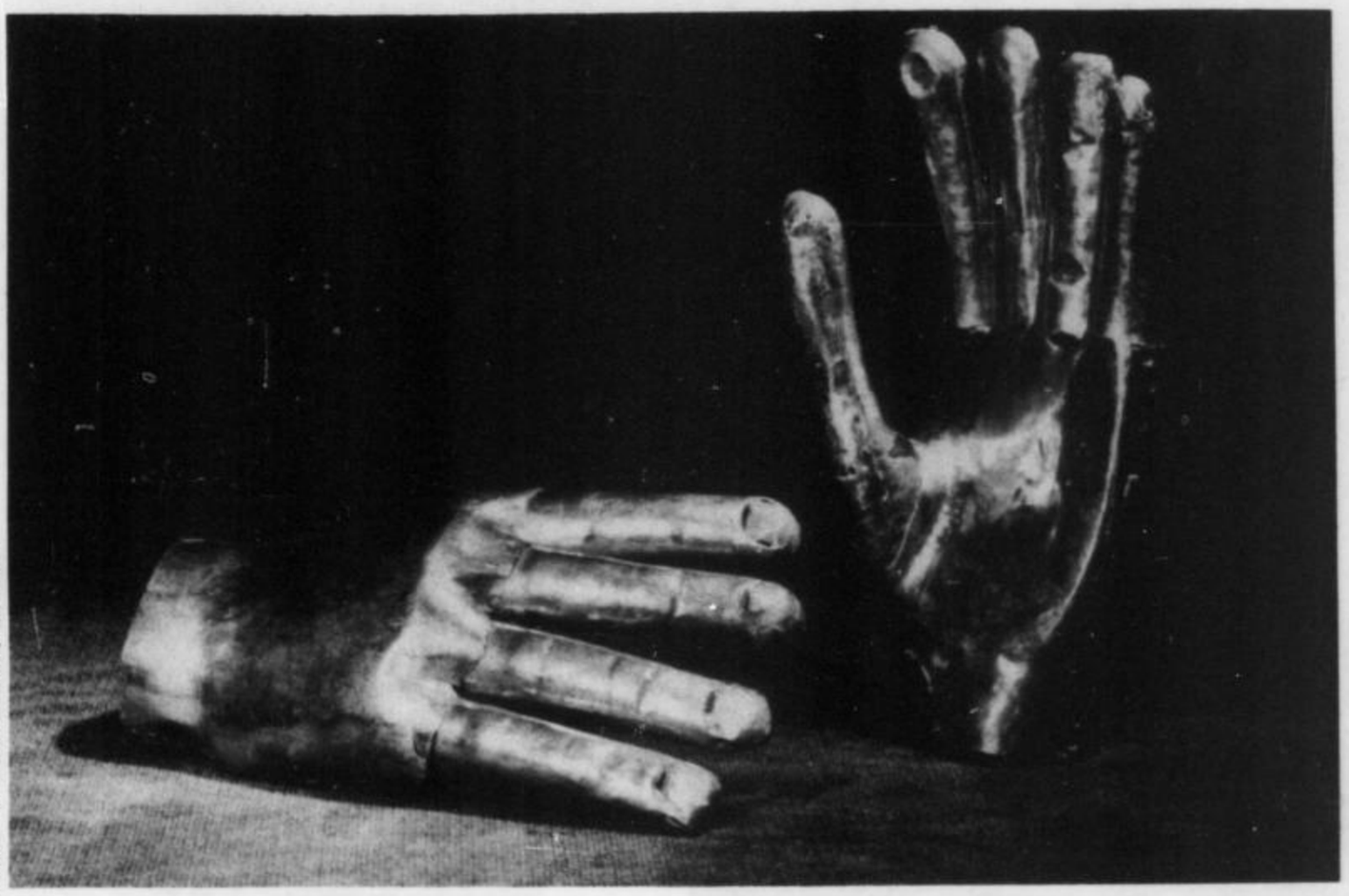


Photo © Henri Stierlin, Geneva

Skilled metallurgists, the Mochica worked in gold, silver and copper. Above, gold votive hands (300-600 AD).

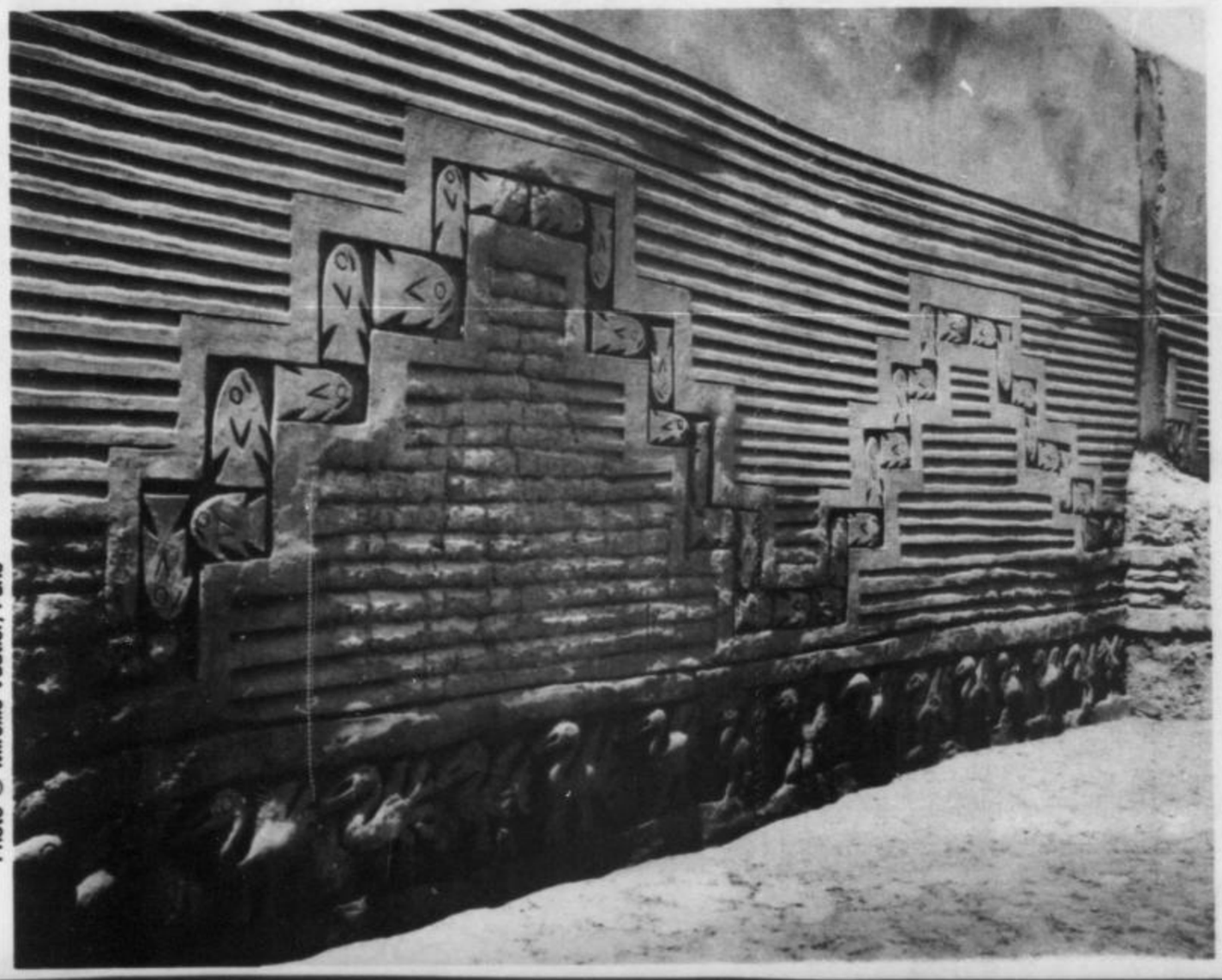


Photo © Mireille Vautier, Paris

From the year 1000 onwards, the Chimú extended their influence to the whole of northern Peru, creating an empire which was conquered by the Incas around 1465. In the ruins of their immense capital, Chan-Chán, on a site stretching over more than 28 square km at the mouth of the Moche valley, is a complex of rectangular walled precincts or "palaces" which measure as much as 530 m by 265 m and must have been used as dwellings by the ruling class. The brick walls are decorated with relief designs (right).

The astonishing wealth of pre-Columbian civilizations is illustrated by these objects from three major cultural areas, Meso-America, the Caribbean, and the Andes.

Man's head in ochre terra-cotta, 11th-16th century; height 16.5 cm (Costa Rica).

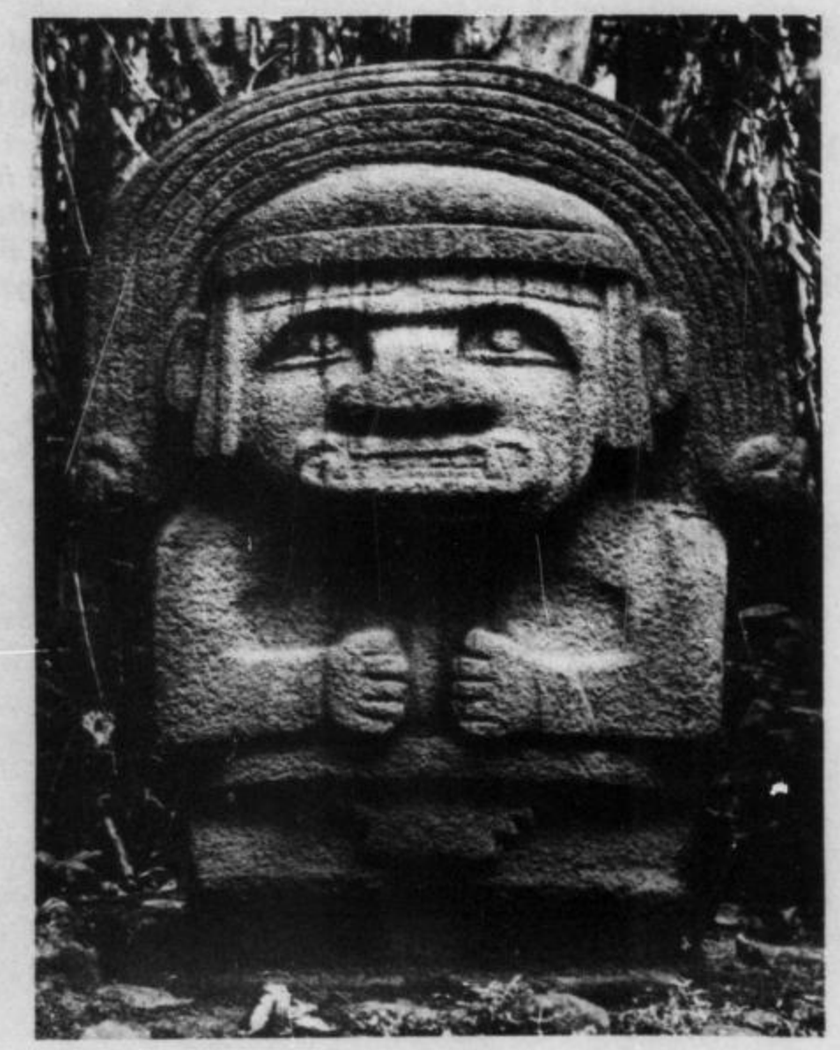
Photo © *Musée de l'Homme*, Paris

Reclining figure carved in lignite; length 15 cm (Venezuela).

Photo © *Musée de l'Homme*, Paris

Anthropomorphic carved monolith (7th-14th century; height 3 m) is a product of the Tiahuanaco culture of Bolivia. The archaeological complex at Tiahuanaco, near Lake Titicaca, is one of the most important in South America.

Photo © Henri Stierlin, Geneva



Anthropomorphic pestle in black basalt, 11th-16th century; height 14 cm (Dominican Republic).

Photo Oster © *Musée de l'Homme*, Paris

Monolithic statue of a god (height 1.54 m) from the famous archaeological site of San Agustín (Colombia).

Photo © Michel Hetier, Paris

▶ smelting and casting and made gold and silver jewels of great beauty, greatly surpassing our Spanish jewellers because they could make birds whose heads, tongues and wings could be made to move. They made monkeys and other animals in whose hands they placed trinkets which seemed to dance with them... which caused Spanish jewellers to marvel".

When the Incas burst upon the Andean cultural scene, they brought about a profound change in the different pre-existing creative currents. Ruling an empire implied a strict, efficient organization of society. This was made possible by concentrating and centralizing power in the hands of the Inca and his council. Since art formed an integral part of social life, it was in turn concentrated and became, as it were, a State art. The Incas were efficient planners and brought to their capital, Cuzco, all those who in one way or another were depositaries of knowledge and skills. In this way artists were identified and brought together.

The specific creative contribution of the Incas was manifested principally in architecture. Inspired, perhaps, by their ancestors from Tiahuanaco, the Inca architects seized space and filled it with massive constructions on a gigantic scale. Cyclopean blocks of stone were cut, adjusted and arranged with the utmost precision. At Sacsahuamán, for example, one of the stone blocks forming the wall is seven metres high. Solidity was ensured by embedding and adjusting the blocks in such a way that the projecting parts of some fitted into the depressions of others, and so perfect were the joints that it was impossible to insert even the blade of a knife.

Cuzco was the architectural centre *par excellence* of the Incas. The temple of Coricancha was the centre of the empire and its most important building. The complex was situated on a terrace surrounded by sanctuaries and dwellings. A stone aqueduct brought water from the mountain. All the façades of the palaces and temples were painted and decorated with gold plate. Standing on top of a hill a kilometre away from Cuzco, the fortress of Sacsahuamán is another amazing example of Inca architecture. The defensive walls are made of megaliths, one of which weighs about two hundred tons. These walls were constructed in saw-tooth form by more than 30,000 workers shortly before the Spanish conquest.

Machu Picchu is the best preserved of the Inca cities. It was discovered in 1911 by the American archaeologist Hiram Bingham. Built in the midst of a mountain range, on top of a peak, its construction was very carefully planned. Defended by inaccessible slopes more than a thousand metres high, and by two lines of fortifications, Machu Picchu is at one and the same time a city, a fortress and a sacred enclosure. It is an overwhelming sight. Situated on high, pointing skywards, built stone upon stone, it exemplifies a fundamental aspect of the Inca genius—majesty of form and solidity of construction, in the service of the centralizing power of the State.

■ **Jesús F. García Ruiz**

Machu Picchu, the most fantastic fortress of the Incas, stands on a rocky spur overlooking the river Urubamba in the heart of the Peruvian Andes. Inhabited by the Incas between the 15th and 16th centuries, it was abandoned for reasons that have not been explained, and only rediscovered, by the American archaeologist Hiram Bingham, in 1911. At the topmost level of this impregnable stronghold is a city with a multitude of dwellings and a ceremonial centre dedicated to the sun. Right, terraces and staircases of Machu Picchu.

Photo © Jesús García Ruiz, Paris

The legacy of colonial art

by Damián Bayón

UNTIL the last third of the eighteenth century, Spanish and Portuguese colonial art in the New World was dominated exclusively by religious themes. It was also influenced to a large extent by art trends in Europe.

Although forms of artistic expression practised in some of the great pre-Columbian cultures at the time of the Conquest were of real worth, their techniques and range differed so widely from the needs of the missionaries that any degree of syncretism was scarcely possible.

Some collaboration did, however, begin to take shape in Mexico, in painting far more than in sculpture. Those among the indigenous population who had a gift for drawing and the use of colour were trained by friars who were proficient in these subjects. As a result, a large number of murals were executed in the early monasteries, inspired by engravings and in some cases by the illuminations of printed books in the early Renaissance style.

European artists initially had to be "imported" for easel painting, and in turn they trained local artists. The first European painters to arrive in the Spanish colonies naturally included Spaniards, but there were also many Italians, Flemings and Germans, some of whom were subjects of the Spanish crown. Their work was marked by the prevailing styles of the period. At first it displayed a certain archaic quality, a hint of Italian Mannerism and its Spanish and Flemish derivatives. By the late seventeenth century the European schools of painting were taking fifty to a hundred years to reach America. This delay was gradually reduced and towards the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, the rococo and neo-classical styles appeared almost simultaneously in the mother countries and in the colonies.

In the sixteenth century three Italian painters of a certain stature appeared in South America: the Jesuit Bernardo Bitti (1548-1610) and the laymen Matías Pérez de Alesio (1547-1628) and Angelino Medoro (1565-1632). They were important not only because of their own works, which were influenced by the international Mannerism of the day, but also because they trained local-born artists such as the Ecuadorian Fray Pedro Bedón and the Panamanian Brother Hernando de la Cruz, both of whom worked in Quito.

About the same time a Fleming named Simón Pereyns (1558-1589) appeared in Mexico and soon became famous. He was followed by a number of Spaniards including Baltasar de Echave Orio (1548-1619) who was to create a dynasty with his descendants Echave Ibía (1583-1660) and Echave Rioja (1632-1682).

On the ceilings of two manor-houses at Tunja in New Granada (now Colombia) are a number of curious paintings which, although of no great

Photo © Wilhelm Braga, Paris

This statue of Hercules supporting a pillar in the church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, at Sabará, Brazil, is the work of Antonio Francisco Lisboa,* O Aleijadinho *(the little cripple), 1730-1814, the most important Ibero-American sculptor of the colonial era.

The Holy Family, by Diego Quispe Tito (1611-1681), a Peruvian artist of Indian extraction, who was the leader of the so-called "Cuzco school". This painting is now in the church of La Merced, Cuzco, Peru.

Photo © Damián Bayón, Paris

importance from a strictly artistic point of view, suggest through their combination of mythological and Christian themes an unusual humanistic culture. Also based in Colombia was the founder of another dynasty, Baltasar de Figueroa. Born in Seville around 1600, he was the father of Gaspar and the grandfather of Baltasar de Vargas Figueroa, who is mainly remembered through his pupil Gregorio Vásquez de Arce y Ceballos (1638-1711), a highly accomplished painter and undoubtedly the most accomplished artist in New Granada during the colonial period.

In Ecuador, Father Bedón and Brother Hernando de la Cruz were succeeded by at least two other important artists, Miguel de Santiago (1626-1706) and Nicolás Javier de Goríbar (1665-1740). The only outstanding figure of the eighteenth century seems to have been Manuel de Samaniego (1767-1824).

Seventeenth-century Peruvian art was marked by the rivalry between Basilio de Santa Cruz (died 1699), an academic painter and protégé of Bishop Mollinado, and the far more original Diego Quispe Tito (1611-1681). The latter, of Indian stock, was the pioneer and chief representative of the so-called "Cuzco School", a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century movement whose anti-realism was reflected in the free adaptation of the Flemish engravings then widely circulating in America. Other characteristic features of the School were a rejection of perspective, an insistence on the frontal presentation of sacred figures, and the use of arabesques applied to the canvas in gold leaf, what is known professionally as *brocateado*.

In Bolivia, the remarkable figure of Melchor Pérez de Holguín (1665-1724) bestrides the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although he had tried to imitate Zurbarán, he became one of the most original of the colonial painters.

Meanwhile, in Mexico, painting continued to follow European trends. The country's most notable painters between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were Sebastián de Arteaga (1610-1656), a Spanish disciple of Zurbarán who emigrated to Mexico, where he had a powerful influence; José Juárez (1615-1660), who may have studied with Arteaga but seems more archaic than his master; and above all Cristóbal de Villalpando (1645-1714), a painter who recalls the Spanish painter Juan de Valdés Leal. With another great master of decoration, Juan Correa (died 1739) he decorated the sacristy of the cathedral in Mexico City.

But the most important of all seems to have been Miguel Cabrera (1695-1768), born in Oaxaca and therefore a Creole, who painted for the famous church of Santa Prisca in Taxco and produced, among other works, a well-known portrait of the great Mexican poetess Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

Portuguese-Brazilian colonial painting took a completely different direction, eschewing the easel in favour of the large-scale decoration of wooden ceilings. This art form was deliberately "perspectivist" and followed the example of the great painter of "glorias", Father Pozzo, who worked during the brilliant period of the Italian seventeenth century. ▶

Pulpit of the church of San Francisco, at Quito, a city which is included in the World Heritage List of Cultural and Natural Properties. The façade of the church is considered to be one of the finest in South America and its interior decoration is among the best examples of colonial religious art. The pulpit dates from the mid-16th century. The statues are polychrome and the niches and columns, like the various altars of the church, are covered in gold leaf.

Photo C. Collin Delavaud © LEDA, Paris

DAMIAN BAYON, *Argentine historian and art critic, has worked with Unesco on a number of occasions and has taught at several universities. Among his published works are* Artistas Contemporáneos de América Latina *(Unesco, 1981),* The Changing Shape of Latin American Architecture *(co-author), and* Latin America in its Art, *of which he was editor (see inside back cover).*

▶ Brazilian historians identify two periods in this type of painting—the Baroque and the Rococo. The most outstanding exponent of the former was José J. da Rocha (1737-1807), who executed the paintings in the church of La Concepción de la Playa in the lower city of Salvador, in the State of Bahia. His style is architectonic, favouring sombre colours which heighten the dramatic character of his subjects.

The Rococo is represented by a number of artists of merit, outstanding amongst whom was Manuel de Costa Athaíde (1762-1837), who was born in Mariana in Minas Gerais State. He painted the admirable ceiling in the exquisite little church of St. Francis of Assisi at Ouro Preto. In this instance the painter's intention is in perfect harmony with the dictates of the Rococo style: the painting is less realistic, more ethereal and undefined, and the colour range is deliberately limited to pastel shades.

Ibero-American colonial sculpture obeys different criteria. In both the Spanish and Portuguese territories, statuary, altar-pieces, choir stalls and pulpits reveal unmistakably Peninsular origins. Among those who travelled to America in search of fortune in the new lands were better sculptors than painters, and almost from the outset they trained locally-born pupils.

At the beginning of the colonial period in Mexico a somewhat crude form of sculpture known as *tequitoui* ("tributary" in Náhuatl) was produced by Indians who worked under the supervision of Spanish monks and made carvings, predominantly of atrial crosses, into which they introduced materials or elements characteristic of their ancestral culture. In central America as a whole and in the Caribbean, the European impact was so complete and final that it is impossible to distinguish between the work of Spanish and indigenous sculptors.

The remarkable expressiveness of South American statuary originated in Quito, where a sculptural tradition was established which was undoubtedly due to the creation by the first Flemish Franciscans of the San Andrés School of Arts and Crafts. The Quito image-carvers adopted types and poses derived from the Andalusian schools, but their use of colours was influenced by the Castilian School, in the sense that they produced a brilliant finish that contrasted with the sombre finish practised in the south of Spain.

This picture of Saint Luke and the Virgin Mary is a Mexican work dating from about 1850. In style it is typical of Spanish-American painting of the colonial period, but the artist has used fragments of feathers instead of pigments in the manner of the Aztecs and other pre-Columbian peoples.

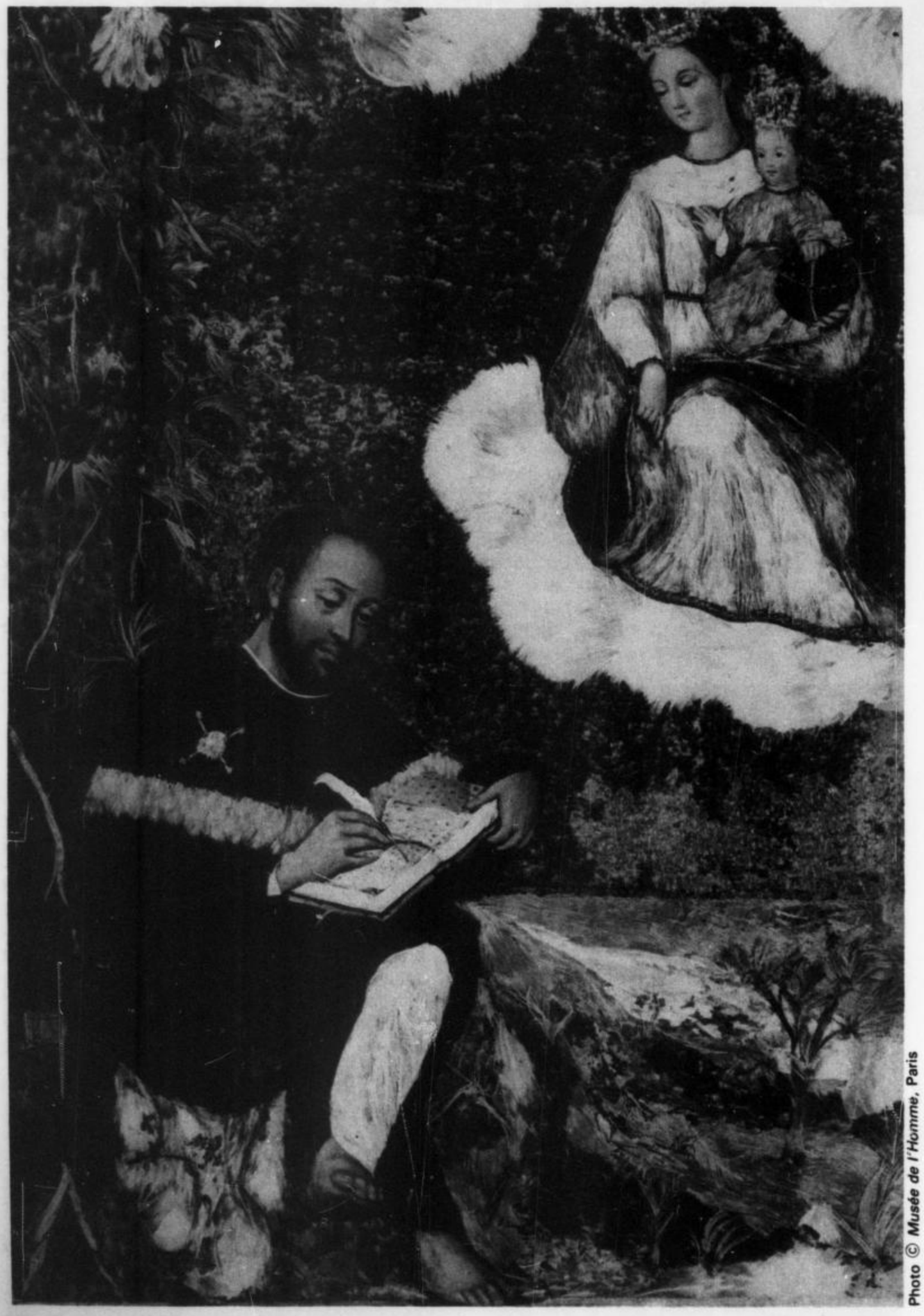


Photo © *Musée de l'Homme*, Paris

The Quito sculptors form a coherent group. All, or nearly all, of them were American born. They included at least one mestizo and one pure Indian. First of all there was Father Carlos (approx. 1620-1680), who carved life-size figures with a certain degree of realism and was the teacher of José Olmos, known as "Pampite" (active between 1650 and 1690), who was also influenced by Martínez Montanes and specialized in figures of Christ and Calvaries. The brilliant mestizo Bernardo de Legarda (died 1773) emerged somewhat later. He was a highly accomplished artist, a sculptor of altar-pieces, a gilder and image-maker who invented an elegant type of figure called the "Virgen Danzante" (Dancing Virgin), sometimes carved on a reduced scale. Finally, the work of the late eighteenth-century Indian sculptor Manuel Chili, known as "Caspicara", marks a contrast with the smiling gracefulness of Legarda and includes the *Descent from the Cross*, a sculpture of great pathos, in the cathedral of Quito.

It is curious that central America, the Caribbean, New Granada and Peru did not produce the equals of the great Quito sculptors or their Brazilian contemporaries. In those parts sculpture was at its best in choir stalls and altar-pieces rather than in statues. Two notable examples in Mexico are the Spaniard Lorenzo Rodríguez (1704-1774), creator of the Metropolitan Sanctuary with its two exuberant Baroque facades, and Jerónimo Balbas (who worked between 1709 and 1761) and executed the famous Altar-piece of the Kings in the cathedral of Mexico City.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, examples of Portuguese art had a strong influence in northeastern and central Brazil. A notable feature of this early period in Brazilian sculpture was that nearly all the sculptors were lay brothers who worked for their respective Orders. The Jesuits tended to carve in wood whereas the Benedictines modelled in clay, producing objects which they painted in various colours and then baked in ovens at a high temperature. There was one notable exception, the Benedictine Father Domingo de la Concepción (died 1717), who carved directly in wood.

A number of interesting artists emerged in the eighteenth century. One of them was Manuel Brito (active between 1726 and 1739), who collaborated with his kinsman Francisco Javier de Brito (died 1751) on the altar-pieces of the splendid church of San Francisco de la Penitencia in Rio de Janeiro.

Both of these artists influenced, from a distance, the most important figure in colonial sculpture in the whole of the Americas—Antonio Francisco Lisboa (1730-1814), a mulatto better known by his nickname *O Aleijadinho* (the cripple) because of a terrible infirmity which deformed his hands. An accomplished artist, *O Aleijadhino* was an architect, like his Portuguese father, and above all a great sculptor capable of carving directly in stone or wood.

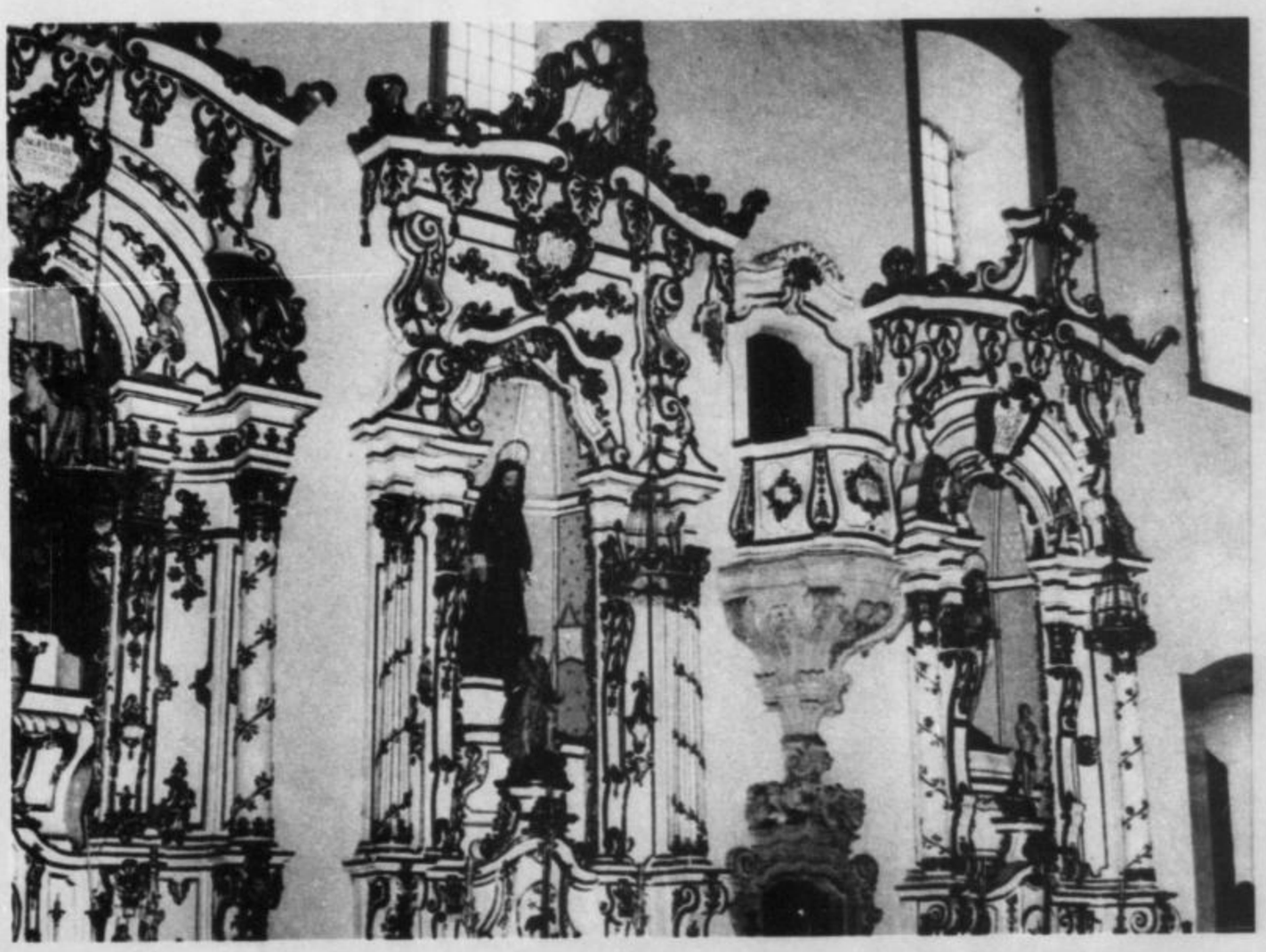
■ **Damián Bayón**

Baroque splendours of Latin America

Immediately after the Conquest, Spanish missionaries began building churches and convents in the architectural style of their homeland, adapted to meet the exigencies of these new latitudes. Gradually a new style evolved which, from the 17th century, was to culminate in the rich ornamental profusion of Ibero-American Baroque, in which the originality of native artists found full and free expression. On this page we present four examples of this "Colonial" style. Top right, façade of the church of La Merced, Antigua, Guatemala. The outside of the church, which dates from the 17th century, is completely covered with decorative relief-work, including garlands, twisted fluting and geometric and figurative designs. Right, the cathedral of Potosí, Bolivia, built at the beginning of the 19th century following the layout of the cathedral of Havana. Bottom right, altarpiece of the high altar of the mid-18th century church of Santa Prisca, Taxco, Mexico. Santa Prisca is a masterpiece of "Churrigueresque" baroque art (inspired by the art of the Spanish architect Churriguera). Below, the interior of the 18th century church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, an excellent example of the Brazilian baroque style sometimes also termed "Rococo".

Photo © Vautier-Decool, Paris

Photo © Mireille Vautier, Paris



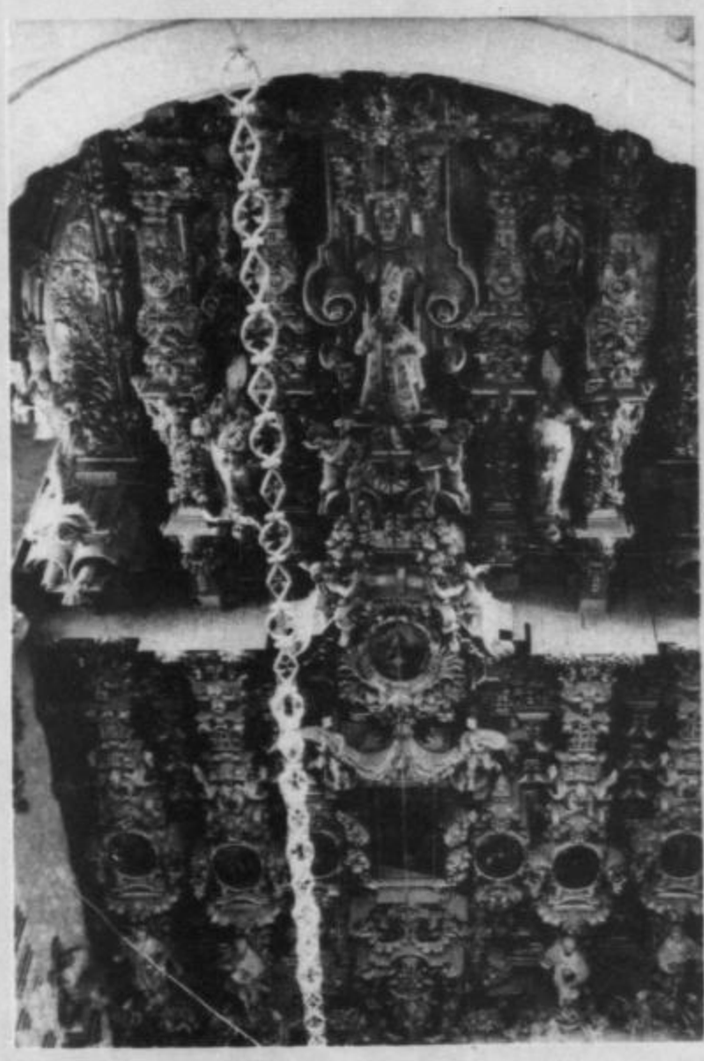


Photo © Fr. Hebert-Stevens, Ed. Arthaud, Paris

'ENCHANTED SEASHELL'

SOMETIME around 1515, a handful of Spaniards led by Captain Pánfilo de Nárvaez and Fray Bartolomé de las Casas established a settlement in Cuba on the southern coast of what is now the province of Havana. However, this settlement did not last long and its founders moved to the northern coast near the Straits of Florida, whose swift currents were an aid to navigation. They came to a harbour consisting of a narrow inlet opening into a large bay, well protected by hills against hurricanes. The town of San Cristóbal de la Habana was finally established on the western shores of this bay in November 1519. The exact date is no longer known since the records of the municipal council covering the period from that year to 1550 were burned by the French pirate Jacques de Sores.

Oral tradition has it that, in accordance with the custom of that time, the weary founders celebrated their first mass and held their first meeting beneath a ceiba tree, in the shade of which a settlement of *bohios* (huts) began to grow, for initially the Europeans adopted the indigenous style of dwelling—houses made of palm-leaves with a roof of two sloping sides and a beaten earth floor.

Gold fever and Faustian restlessness so captivated the minds of these conquistadores that their only thought was to set forth in search of riches on the mainland (Mexico, El Dorado, El Darien) and of the Spring of Eternal Youth in Florida. The embryonic town lapsed into oblivion and only acquired the title of city when the Spanish crown realized that, thanks to its geographical situation, it was the principal port of call on the route to the Indies. It became the gateway to the New World, through which all the gold and silver from America had to pass on its way to metropolitan Spain.

Pirates and privateers soon became aware of this traffic and were not slow to attack it. Havana was fortified and surrounded with a girdle of stone ramparts which made it impregnable. Remains of this architectural frenzy can still be seen: Morro Castle, La Punta, and the Castilla de la Real Fuerza.

Set on a rock at the mouth of the harbour (like the lighthouses of San Juan de Porto Rico and of Arico in Chile), the lighthouse of El Morro has been aiding navigation since 1630. The Castillo de la Real Fuerza was built between 1555 and 1577. It is the oldest castle in America, and the first building of its kind on the continent in which the Renaissance design which revolutionized military architecture was used. On one of its bastions stands the Torre del Homenaje (Tower of Homage) the cupola of which is topped by a weathervane known as the Giraldilla, an obvious allusion to the Giralda in Seville.

The famous nine o'clock cannon fire, which alarms foreigners and enables the locals to check their watches, is another reminder of those nights of torches and

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General view of Havana and its bay, in a lithograph by Eduardo Laplante (1818-?). Old Havana, one of the oldest and most beautiful cities of the New World, was founded by the Spanish in 1519. Since 1982 it has been included in Unesco's World Heritage List. However, its restoration and preservation today pose a serious problem for the Cuban authorities who addressed an appeal for help to Unesco. In July 1983, the Director-General of Unesco, Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, launched an appeal to the international community in favour of a campaign to safeguard the Plaza Vieja, the city's historic centre, and Old Havana in general. In making his appeal Mr. M'Bow described Old Havana as "the epitome of all the new cities that have landmarked the epic of the Americas and as an example par excellence of the flamboyant intellectual, artistic and architectural syntheses that sprang from the intermingling of so many destinies all over the continent".

A portrait of Old Havana

by Manuel Pereira

daggers. It announced the closing of the gates in the ramparts (built in the seventeenth century and demolished around 1865), for after this hour Havana was in danger of attack by pirates.

It was thanks to the growing importance of the port that Havana became a maritime city. Carpenters, cabinet-makers, caulkers, mast- and spar-makers and labourers thronged its streets lined with stores, workshops and merchants' premises. The most important ships in the Spanish fleet were built in Havana's shipyards.

The city was also evangelized. The sword was an earthly cross, the cross was a heavenly sword. The green cross embedded in a corner of the Calle Amargura (the street of bitterness) still marks a halting-place for the procession of the Via Crucis to the church of Cristo del Buen Viaje. But Havana's oldest surviving church is that of The Holy Spirit, built between 1638 and 1661. It is the only one whose catacombs have been preserved intact.

At the same time Havana acquired its squares: the Plaza de Armas; the so-called Old (formerly New) Plaza; the Plaza de San Francisco; the Plaza del Cristo del Buen Viaje; and—most famous of all—the Plaza de la Catedral. Construction of the cathedral was started by the Jesuits in 1748; it marks an explosion of Baroque, a splendid unfurling of forms, a book of rock, music turned to stone. Its highly wrought volutes in coral-veined rock recall the spiralling smoke of a Havana cigar.

The cathedral façade is the finest surviving expression of Cuban Baroque, unique for the simplicity of its lines and its sensual movement.

Inside the cathedral there is a niche dedicated to Christopher Columbus, although his sarcophagus, borne by the colossal statues of four sailors, is in Seville, and his body is said to be in Santo Domingo.

The noblemen's palaces lining the cathedral square form the best-preserved and most harmonious architectural group in Old Havana. "This is the finest colonial square in America," said Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus.

An endless dialogue between architecture and nature was the distinctive feature of these buildings, which were adapted to local conditions and represent a distinctive Cuban style. Venetian blinds to let in the land breeze, multi-coloured window-panes to attenuate the glare of the Cuban light, narrow streets shaded by awnings—these are the constant features of an urban architecture that is integrated into the landscape and in which stone, sea and vegetation form a harmonious whole. A *yagruma* flowers on a balcony; the walls are veined with white fossils; no house turns its back on the sea; all seek its breeze.

Havana cathedral is a noteworthy example of the adaptation of Spanish religious architecture to the needs of the West Indies. The great Cuban poet and writer José Lezama Lima observed that one must see the cathedral in profile "in order to capture its undulating rhythms".

Havana also has its little mysteries. The stones in the walls still bear the personal marks of the masons, cut with their chisels, sometimes initials, sometimes indecipherable signs. Many of the tiles bear the thumbprints of the tilers who moulded them into shape on their thighs, and there is even one which has a proverb inscribed on it in Chinese ideograms—"What the heart commands, the hand performs".

In the patios palm trees conduct a dialogue with pillars, as though trunks and columns had mingled and the colonnades been transmuted into petrified palms. Such correspondences and syntheses are a constant feature of this labyrinthine city, which grew in harmony with its surroundings, profiting from the changing light, assuming the varying rhythms of the waves, imposing itself as a living, dynamic organism. Old Havana is a habitable animal, an enchanted, convoluted seashell. ▶

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Photo © Sonia

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Courtyard of the Palace of the Captains General of Havana, now the City Museum.

▶ Arab influence is evident in the geometrical ornamentation of the carved ceilings, the ironwork arabesques, the foliate motifs on the arches, the stars etched by fire on the ceilings, the proliferation of patio fountains, reflecting nostalgia for the starry skies of the desert and the unquenched thirst of the *mudéjar*. If Havana resembles any other city, it is Seville, except that its walls are not whitewashed; its colours have always been green and blue, vegetation and the sea—the city's secret passions.

In 1762 the British made a breach in El Morro and occupied Havana for eleven months. The fortifications which had so stubbornly resisted pirates and filibusters succumbed to British dynamite. This period became known in folk humour as "the time of the mammees", from the name of the Antillean apricot-tree, because of the red coats of the British soldiers.

Spain recovered Havana, and Charles III, having learned a lesson, ordered a huge fortress, La Cabana, to be built on the hill dominating the western shores of the harbour. Havana thus became the first fortified stronghold in the Americas, but it cost such a colossal sum that Charles III, appalled by the cost, went out onto the balcony of his palace and asked for a telescope to look at the lofty walls of La Cabana. "It has cost me so much", he said, "that it should be visible from here".

At this period Havana, with its 30,000 inhabitants, was already one of the major cities of the New World, more populous than Boston, New York, or Philadelphia. The snuffboxes of Louis XVI's courtiers were filled with Havana snuff, and our sugar was beginning to sweeten Europe.

The sugar boom transformed Havana from a place of transit into a terminal. Towards the end of the eighteenth century about a thousand ships a year entered the bay to load sugar and deliver goods from overseas. The independence of the United States brought an influx of traders eager to make fortunes. The revolution in Haiti led to the arrival of large numbers of French.

Cosmopolitan elegance prevailed, but slavery was a powder keg ready to explode. Thus appeared the Cuban capital at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was at this time that neo-classical architecture appeared in Havana. A small-scale imitation of the Parthenon, El Templete, stands a stone's throw from the mole, on the spot where the city is supposed to have been founded more than four and a half centuries ago. It was erected, not only to commemorate the foundation, but as an act of fealty to Spain by the Captaincy General in the name of "faithful Havana", at a moment when America was swept by rebellion. The entrance pillars are surmounted by bronze pineapples, an emblem of Havana. Behind the gates stands the founding ceiba tree—or rather its descendant, since the original died in the middle of the eighteenth century from the effects of the salt air from the sea nearby.

The inventions of the nineteenth century soon reached Havana. Watt's steam engine was operating in the city within four years of its invention. Havana was the fourth capital in the world to establish a railway and the third to be lit by gas. Morse had scarcely launched his campaign to promote his telegraph system before Havana had its telegraph lines. The telephone arrived with its inventor. Moreover, Havana was the first city in the world to have an automatic telephone system, because it was chosen as a showplace for the experiment. The first radio station was opened by Marconi himself in Havana. Six months after their introduction in Paris, the first cinematographs to appear in America were set up in Havana.

It was a century of prosperity, or rather of apparent prosperity, for after 1868 the flame of the fight for independence from Spanish colonial rule was alight in the eastern part of the country.

Meanwhile, splendour took over in Havana. In the mansions of the nobility, luxurious but on a human scale, iron gradually replaced wood: doors patterned with nails, grilles, door-knockers, locks and handrails... roofs with terracotta denticulations. What we now call Old Havana and what was then simply the city within the walls, is thronged with images. This is the Havana of Martí and Carpentier, of Humboldt, Einstein, Sarah Bernhardt, Garibaldi, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Lorca, Antonin Artaud, Mayakowski, Isadora Duncan, André Breton, Caruso, Simón Bolívar, Benito Juarez, Francisco de Miranda, Valle-Inclán, Igor Stravinsky... They all came here and were dazzled.

When the twentieth century began, the star-spangled banner was flying over El Morro. After thirty years of war against Spain, Cubans had failed to achieve full independence because of armed intervention by the United States. A make-believe, frustrating republic was subsequently proclaimed. The last gas lamps gave way to electricity, trams replaced the two-wheeled carriages called *volantas,* and asphalt took the place of cobblestones. Art Nouveau and Art Déco made a fleeting appearance on some buildings, but the dominant style was that of the foreign banks: grandiloquent, eclectic, theatrical. Meanwhile, first the aristocracy then the bourgeoisie moved out to the new suburbs—El Cerro, El Vedado, Miramar—that were growing outside the city walls, and their city mansions were converted into phalansteries, the community dwellings known in Havana as *solares.*

Overcrowding and promiscuity were the hallmarks of intra-mural Havana during the first half of the present century. The port area was full of "joints" with illuminated signs in English—in a country where more than a million people could not even read Spanish. Many historic buildings were demolished to make way for absurdities in imported glass.

The Cuban historian Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring (1889-1964) protested, but the demolitions continued, and it was only the triumph of the revolution in 1959 that halted the destructive advance in the name of "modernity" and "civilization" which threatened to fill the oldest part of the capital with skyscrapers. After half a century of official indolence, the Revolution inherited a sad, badly scarred Old Havana.

A land of passage for so many years, people of the most diverse origins—from Africa, Europe, China, Yucutàn—have met here in a kaleidoscopic amalgam that has produced our unique but varied ethnic, ethical and aesthetic identity. A crucible of cultures, styles, iconographies and mythologies. Is it because our streets are so narrow and the balconies so close to each other that the inhabitant of Old Havana is such an expansive, loquacious, cordial being? The humble folk who people this city, living in former palaces, are like new princes who need no coats of arms because their nobility is of the heart.

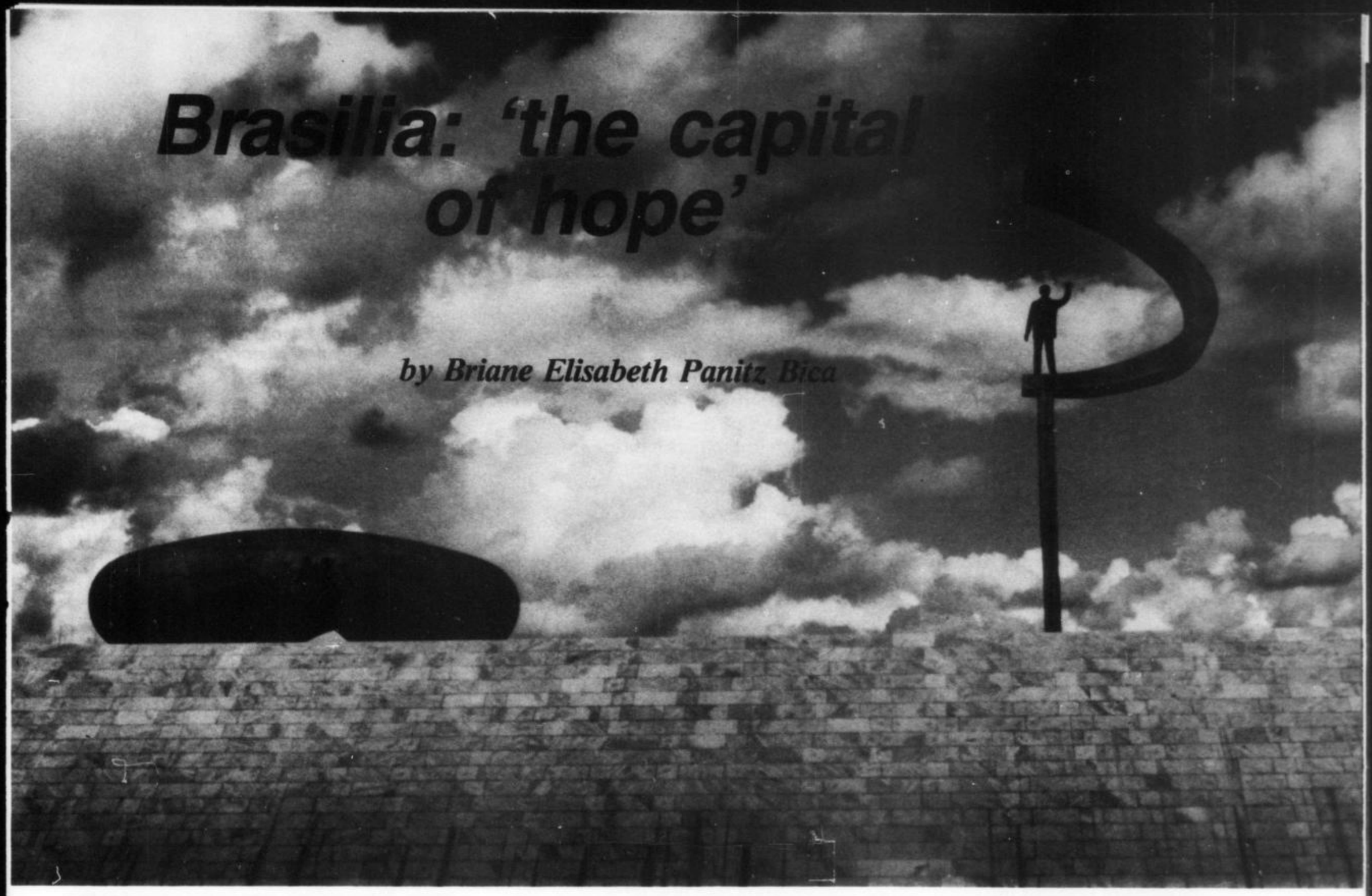
It is impossible to rescue 465 years of stone overnight, but Old Havana will be saved. Its splendid face will be restored and be converted, not into a lifeless museum but into a museum that is living and can be lived in. It will be saved, with its gas lamps and distant ships, its harbour wall for lovers, and its shadow pantomime, its nine o'clock cannon and whispering fountains, its damp pavements and the winking eye of the cyclops on El Morro.

■ **Manuel Pereira**

Photo J.C. Simon © LEDA, Paris

Brasilia: 'the capital of hope'

by Briane Elisabeth Panitz Bica



NEXT year will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the inauguration of Brasilia and the twenty-eighth of the beginning of its construction. This is not a long time in the life of a city, but Brasilia's presence in the history of Brazil goes back more than a century. The idea of transferring the capital to the central plateau was first suggested in 1817, when José Bonifacio de Andrade e Silva, known as the "father of Brazilian independence", proposed what are now its permanent site and name. From then on, the proposal was periodically repeated, until it was finally adopted by Juscelino Kubitschek during the 1956 Presidential election campaign.

As the most extensive and complete application of the principles of modern city planning, Brasilia has made its own contribution to the history of urban development. It had its origins in an act of reason, without any roots in Brazil's urban past, without any link with the land on which it was created. Each line traced on paper by Lucio Costa, the pupil of Le Corbusier who conceived Brasilia, was transformed into an avenue traced by a tractor across the countryside. The meeting of the two axes, "The first act of someone who takes possession of a site by tracing a cross on it", gave form to the city—"the capital of hope" towards which flocked, from every corner of the country, all those who, by participating in the epic of its construction, were embarking on the creation of a "new Brazil" which would make their dreams of a better life come true.

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Through a dynamic of its own, the construction process of Brasilia adapted itself to the future site. On the one hand there is official Brasilia, seat of the central Government, and on the other its satellite towns designed to house the mass of the less privileged citizens. The former now has 300,000 inhabitants, and the seven satellite towns have a total population of one million, forming an aggregate which, by reason of its size and urbanizing influence, has overflowed towards the municipal centres of the neighbouring States and has led to the complex officially known as the Geo-economic Region of Brasilia. The principles of city planning applied in Brasilia have also influenced the configuration of new towns in other parts of Brazil and in other countries.

While the city has been experiencing a process of consolidation a sharp debate has been going on between Brasilia's defenders and its critics. Some point to its advantages compared with other great cities—the comfort of living in its *supermanzanas* (complexes consisting of six-storey buildings, shops, schools, a patio, church and a spacious green area, situated along the major highway axis), the vast panoramic view with a diaphanous sky and clouds forming a backdrop to the plateau, the absence of atmospheric, sonic and visual pollution, the spacious green areas, the free flow of traffic and ease of parking. Others criticize the logic which the city imposes on its inhabitants and point out its defects: an excessive division of the city's activities into different topographical sectors; the gigantism which predominates even in residential districts; the long distances between buildings which make it difficult for pedestrians to get about the city, lead to an excessive use of cars, and bring an element of remoteness to personal relations; the divisions of the city caused by high-speed

Memorial monument to Juscelino Kubitschek, the President of Brazil who took the decision to build Brasilia on the central Brazilian plateau and designated it as the nation's capital in 1960. One of the reasons for the creation of Brasilia may be found in these words of Juscelino Kubitschek: "Our country, the fifth largest in the world, has immense fertile lands as empty as the Sahara, while millions of Brazilians cling to the crowded shoreline."

motorways; the famous "lack of corners" due to the fact that buildings are scattered in such a way that there are no angles formed by street intersections; and the excessive social stratification caused by the high cost of living in Brasilia.

Apart from the pros and cons there can be no doubt about the exceptional character and quality of Brasilia as an achievement of urban planning and architecture involving a synthesis between the rationalistic approach adopted by Lucio Costa and the exuberant architecture of Oscar Niemeyer, who designed the most important buildings. Brasilia is also notable for the fact that so far it has succeeded in preserving its integrity almost completely in spite of difficulties and the not always peaceful coexistence between the interests of the federal administration, for which the city was created, and those of the local authorities responsible for its functioning.

Brasilia's size and dynamism, together with its unity and physical homogeneity, are a matter of surprise for visitors, especially students of the urban process, who find themselves in a laboratory where theories which have been discussed all over

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Four artists in chiaroscuro

by Edouard Glissant

MATTA

MATTA is an artist who escapes the controversy between abstract and figurative art, slipping out of the debating chamber and dissolving like a wraith in the bluish haze with which so many of his greatest works are suffused. And if what he paints has not the immediacy of the real, neither is it a sketch-plan or a diagram of something that exists. I would go so far as to say that Matta is forever painting the pulsation of life.

Depth in Matta's painting is achieved by a projection forward in front of the canvas of pictural space, a proscenium which saw his first attempts to render visible the convulsion of modern thought: the disintegration of old systems of logic, the vertiginous flights of Eros, resistance against tyrannies, the unshackling of the "Savage Mind".

Is it possible to "paint", not states of mind, but the very functioning of the mind or, going still further, that fabulous gamble the "complete man", reconciled with all forms of humanity, finding in them his own being and fulfilment?

Matta's painting shows us that it can be done. What we find in them is the movement that fuels our most personal upsoarings and consolidates the roots we share most widely with others. Planes that combine or resist each other on the canvas, spirals of discovery, explosions of revealed incompatibilities, condensation into new stars of our most intense convictions—here matter joins company with and follows the dynamism of the spirit. Matta does not paint "things", he illuminates trajectories.

This is an artist who forever seeks to find out and demonstrate "how things work". Not merely, like an architect reflecting on his work, how it is constructed, but how it really functions. Can we, for example, gauge or even begin to comprehend the vast ferment of cultures reacting and interacting with each other today? We have no guide or blueprint to judge by; but does this mean that we should renounce all attempts to read the Book of Destiny? Matta's paintings raise questions such as these and show us that there is no halting the spectacle of life.

This is thoroughly modern painting, aloof from conventional quarrels, investigative, always in movement; we know that it has its origins in the ancient wisdom of the Andes, but already it is exploring unknown regions that humanity is projecting on the forefront of the proscenium stage of history.

SEGUI

THE art of Antonio Seguí has affinities with the art of prose, the obstinacy and ruggedness of which Seguí adopts to probe reality and bring out its raw qualities.

It has often been said that colonial Baroque resulted from a superabundance of being. The artist took pleasure, a mischievous pleasure perhaps, in showing that he was capable of rendering to excess what he was expected to express: catholicity, civilization, flamboyant rhetoric.

In the case of Seguí, we are without any doubt in the presence of another kind of Baroque, which does not strive towards the overelaboration of being but tracks it down behind its masquerades and gesticulations. The aim is to discover our true nature, or what is left of it, perhaps, when it is divested of the shabby finery imposed upon it. Paradoxically, it is the shabby finery that Seguí shows us, so that we can guess at what is hidden beneath.

In all the different stages of Seguí's painting, stages which follow each other with mounting speed, we find the forms of this Baroque, constantly renewed. Rickety towns, overrun towns, prostrate passers-by, leering catastrophes, smashed dolls, clothes for scarecrows, but also the emotion diffused by the light of a street-lamp, the warm colour of a single tree, the word of a rainbow, the sun of a man's step. In other words, the everyday, which pares away our pretensions or alienations and reassures or consoles us at the same time.

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Above: polychrome terra-cotta mask (17 cm wide) from the Classic Period (Teotihuacán III) of Meso-American civilization between 100 and 200 AD (see article page 4). The mask, which incorporates a stylized butterfly in its lower part, is a representation of Xochipilli, god of spring and flowers. It is preserved in Mexico's National Museum of Anthropology and History.

Photo © Henri Stierlin, Geneva

Below: a head, half man, half jaguar, of the kind known in Peru as a* cabeza-clava, *or "nail-head", is embedded in a wall of the pyramid of Chavín, the oldest stone sanctuary of pre-Columbian Peru. The Chavín de Huantar culture (1500 BC-400 AD) blossomed suddenly in a high valley near the sources of the river Marañón. (See article page 9).

Photo © Henri Stierlin, Geneva

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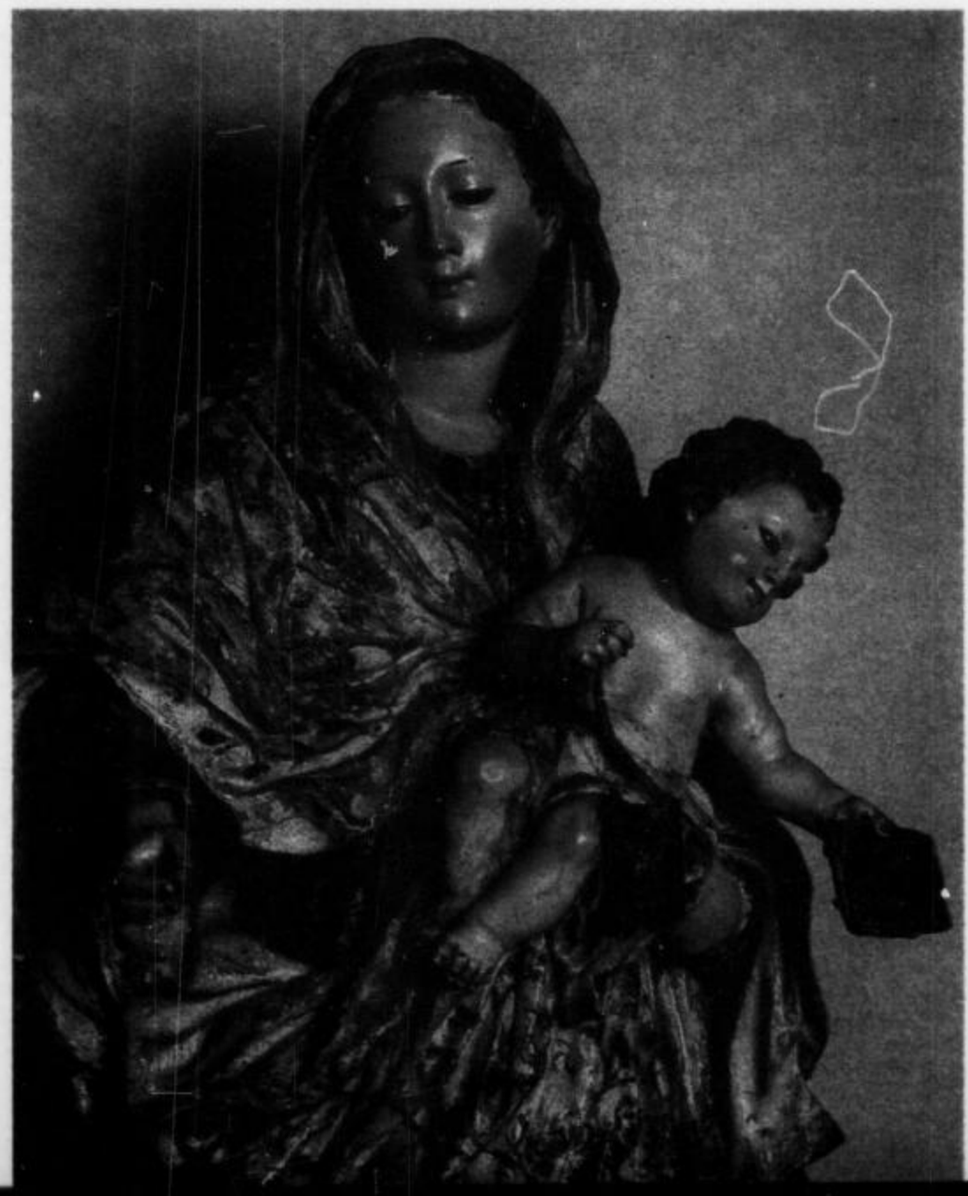
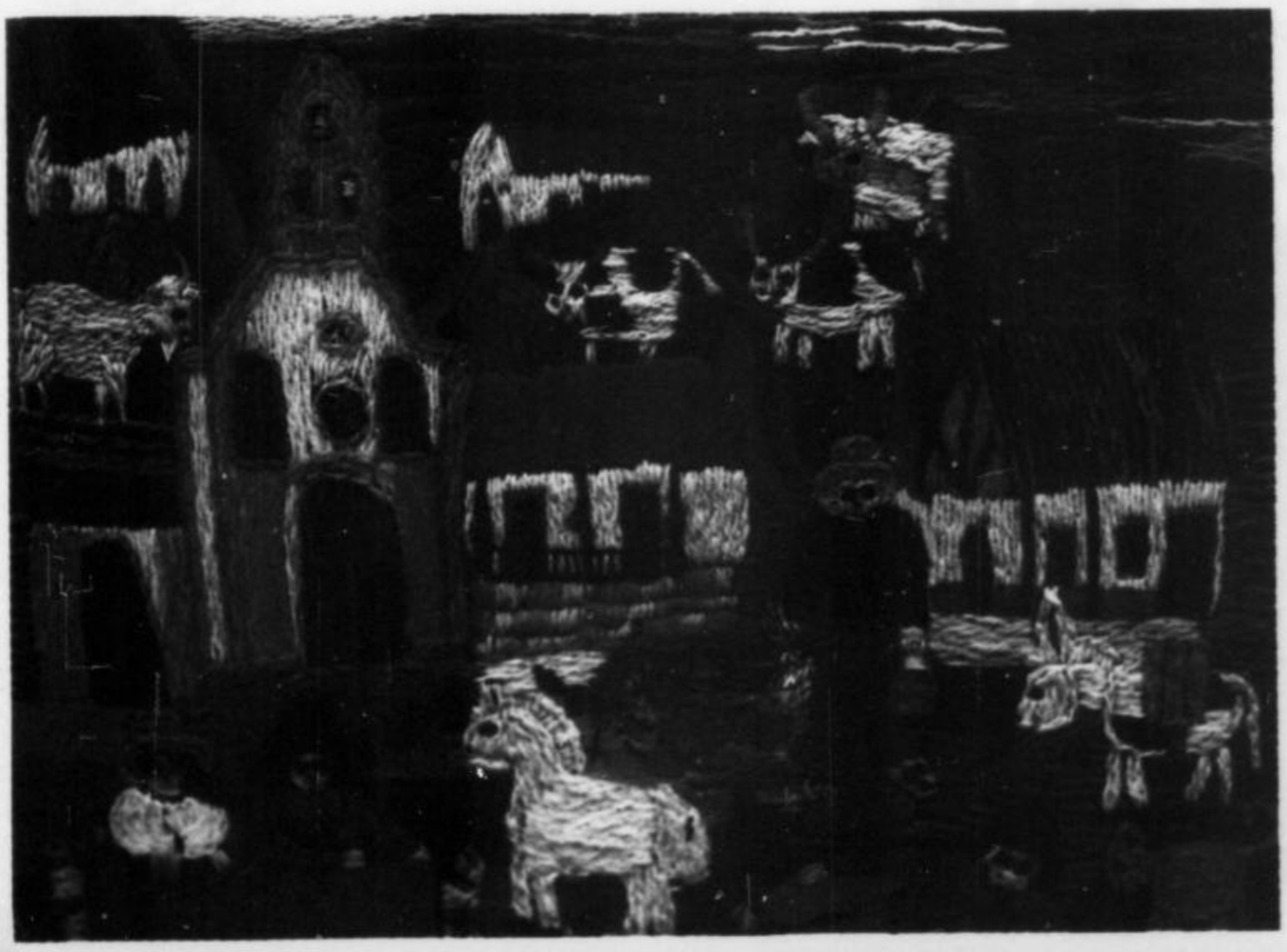
Above:* Mount Champaquí in January, *oil on canvas (?) (1984), by Antonio Seguí (born 1934). See text this page.

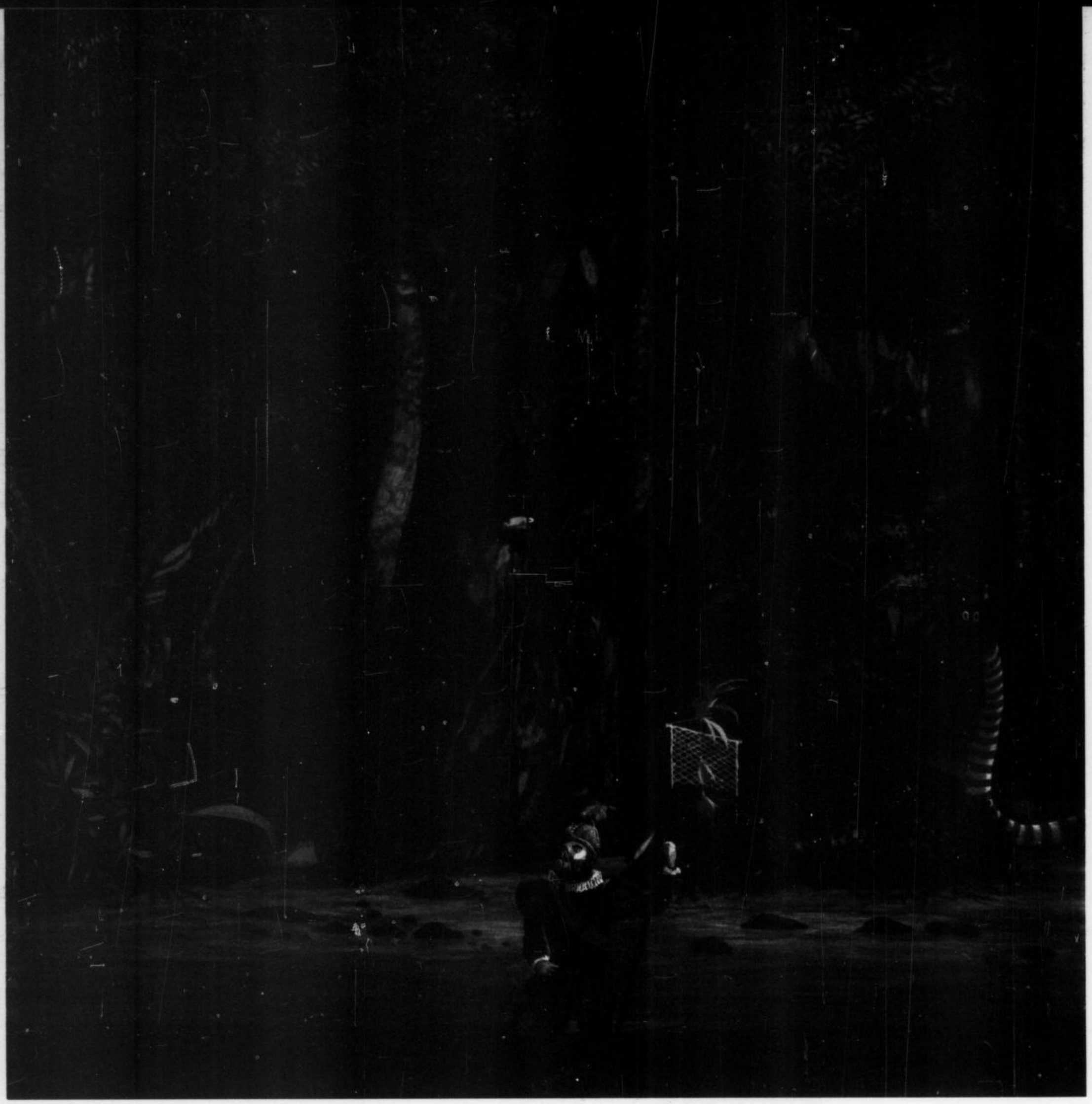
Photo © Fernando Chávez, Paris

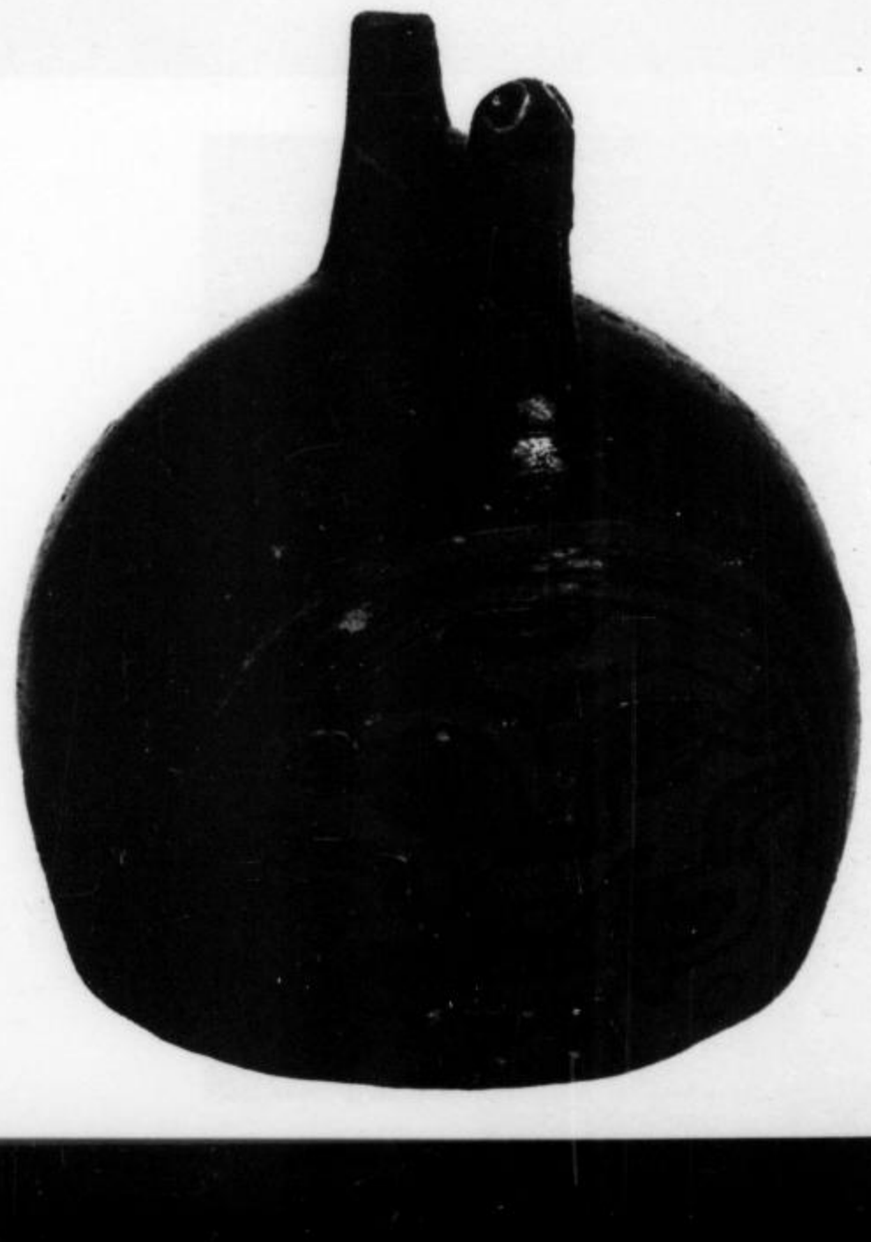
Below: Detail of the* Virgin of Mount Carmel, *now in the museum of the Convent of San Francisco, Quito. The* Virgin *is one of the most celebrated sculptures by the 18th-century Ecuadorian artist Caspicara, of whose works it has been said that they have the lustre of porcelain. Caspicara's real name, Manuel Chili, was found carved at the back of a wooden plaque depicting the sleeping baby Jesus.

Photo © Salvat Editores S.A., Barcelona-Quito









Four artists in chiaroscuro *(continued)*

The unexpected thing is thus that in Seguí's work the obstinacy and ruggedness are full of an unfailing charm. This prose is also poetry which navigates in the depths. Seguí paints that which perverts our nature and makes us strangers to our truth, but also everything that carries us away, secretly nourished by an inner sun, in the tango of tenderness.

LAM

THE art of Wifredo Lam involves a double objective: to seek out and bring into relief the forms secreted by a very concrete reality, that of his native island, and at the same time to draw attention to the cultural predicament in which we find ourselves today and which demands a contribution from each one of us.

Lam's first concern was to fill the canvas; its poetry lies not in the tree but in the profusion of vegetation, verticals surging from the memory, exploding into an island-space-filling jungle. African forms are revived, not through cliché-clouded eyes, but in all their vital inner mobility—triangles wide-eyed with astonishment forming lozenge-shaped bucklers, burgeoning ears of moon-horned grain; and those anatomical anthologies—obduracy of feet round which the soil seems to lap like water, the Sumerian slant of the torso inclined towards a divinity to impart a secret.

The mocking reply of the oppressed. How heartening it was, at the turn of the 1940s, on the fringe of the drama of the Second World War, to discover thus that nothing had been lost of the ancient splendour. Delicate breadth of this assembly, within the same space-time as Aimé Césaire, Nicolás Guillen and Langston Hughes. The people of the Antilles had retained not only the memory of the word, they bore within them the lightning flash of the brush-stroke, the ochreous eminence of so many landscapes recombined.

Lam's work viewed as a whole brings together everything that the artist has amassed, all the elements, the forms, the majestic outpourings, of his island and of his remembrance, and spreads their directing influence to everything from design to the fiesta, to encounter with others. The canvas becomes less saturated. The facts of the Caribbean reality, the revalued ways of the Black African universe fan out in all directions to reach fulfilment, achieving consummation in the vast unforeseen of the interacting world.

Lam, heaven's alchemist, preserves in his work our earthy memories. It is his offering that every breeze that blows, no matter whence it comes, loves to stir with its caress.

GAMARRA

IN José Gamarra's paintings animal and plant life are never far from the source of their perpetually renewed beginning: the fathomless waters of eternal genesis. The Forest here unfolds from the mysterious liquid (pond, river or seashore) from which arise, at any moment, primordial creatures and the promise of the future. Gamarra's Forest is no illusion; it is the land of dreams, with its astonishingly sharply defined contours, where tropical flowers carve out their outlines against the dark blue mass of the sky, where the new man, escaping the relentless eye of the hunter, prepares his festivals..

This South American space-time capsule is so living, so organic that we cannot distinguish that which was from that which is or will be, or the forest from the plantation, the blood of the beast from the blood of the land, the spurt of water from the cascade of oil, the primeval bird from the helicopter.

No known artistic artifice could portray such complexity; neither naive realism nor the sham distortions of the avant-garde whose time scale has no foothold here. What forms and relationships could be imagined that could meet this challenge?

Gamarra's art does more than merely offer a reply to this question. It defines a place where natural representation unites with the symbolism of form, where caricature is inscribed in the living flesh of the landscape, where the clairvoyance of myth is punctuated with mocking laughter, and where humanity, that is to say living and suffering beings, hide and in so doing reveal themselves.

Thus artistic tension is at one with a living experience which is more than merely passively undergone. We are enticed to recommence a voyage of exploration more perilous than that of the seeker of gold. Our task is to reassemble so many obscured and suppressed stories of this America and to embed them in the tranquil permanence of forms adapted to their rebirth. ■

Colour pages
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Above:* Seated Woman *(1949), oil on canvas by Wifredo Lam (1902-1982). See text this page.
Photo Almasy © SPADEM, Paris

Below: Coloured wool tapestry depicting a Colombian landscape was made and sold in a Bogotá market.
Photo © LEDA, Paris

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Above:* The Ambush *(1980), oil on canvas by José Gamarra (born 1934). See text this page.
Photo © All rights reserved

Below: Clay pitcher dating from the period when the Paracas Cavernas culture, in what is now Peru, was influenced by the Chavín culture. It is 18.5 cm high and represents a feline divinity. The incised decoration was painted after firing. (See article page 9).
Photo Werner Lang, Lima © Banco de Crédito del Perú. Taken from *Arte y Tesoros del Perú*.

Photo Ph. Charliat © Rapho, Paris

Dominated by the sixteen 40-metre-high concrete pillars of the cathedral of Brasilia, a concrete disc provides welcome shade from the noonday sun.

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the world have been given practical expression.

Notwithstanding its uniqueness and the careful attention paid to its conservation, certain developments in Brasilia are causing concern. The increase in land values in a city with strictly defined physical limits is leading to pressures that are difficult to control by an administration which lacks the necessary legal and procedural instruments. There is no regulatory plan or building code, and no clear-cut decision has been taken to treat Brasilia as part of Brazil's cultural heritage. As a result, certain criteria laid down in Lucio Costa's project have not been observed, leading, for instance, to the grant of permits to increase the height of buildings in certain parts of the city and to build on land unsuited for construction, and to the enlargement of parking sites and changes in the highway system.

On the other hand the city's inhabitants, who come from the most varied and distant parts of Brazil, are now beginning to exercise their civil rights as they come to form a large, solidly established population, unlike those residents who have no permanent links with the city and move with each change in the Federal Government. Moreover, this fusion of cultures has been followed by the emergence of the first generation of Brasilia-born citizens, who are full of enthusiasm for their city.

Today, thirty years after it was founded, it is clear that Brasilia must review the ways in which it functions. Economic and social conditions have changed, and above all oil is no longer a cheap source of energy. Experience has also shown that excessive "sectorization" has not brought any real benefits for the functioning of the city. These are important problems and important measures are needed to solve them.

Since 1981 the Federal Government, the Government of the Federal District and Brasilia University have been trying jointly to cope with this situation while at the same time safeguarding the essential character of the city. They are engaged in a unique pioneering undertaking to find new ways of preserving a city that is still developing and that was envisaged as a model and synthesis of Brazilian culture by Aloisio Magalhaes, the man who inspired it.

The successful integration of Brasilia into its natural environment required detailed analysis, since the quality of the views from the city to the horizon and to Lake Paraná and, conversely, of the views of the city as a whole from various observation points depends on the quality of land use management. The exceptional location of the Federal District must also be taken into account. Affluents of three major hydrographic basins of South America converge on this small territory, bringing geomorphological evidence of their plant and animal life, whose presence in the Federal District must be preserved intact as a source of information about the continent's physical evolution.

Finally, the purpose of the Pilot Plan for Brasilia is to determine which features safeguard the city's character and which tend to weaken it, in order that the former may be strengthened and the latter corrected. A number of different procedures have been used. Surveys have, for example, been carried out among the resident population in order to discover how they see and use their city, and their criteria have been compared with analyses made in the field by specialists; models have been prepared for visibility tests; a surveyor's study has been made of the evolution of the city since the original project was prepared; documents dating from the time when the city was built have been analysed. From these and other undertakings a picture will emerge to provide a basis for plans to preserve the city's character.

This major operation will lead to a Plan for the Protection of the Historical and Cultural Heritage of Brasilia, which will include legal norms and procedural guidelines which, if adopted, will provide the Federal Government, the State authorities and the Federal District Government with the technical means to protect and improve the essential spirit of Brasilia.

The challenge made by Aloisio Magalhaes must be translated into reality and inspire the authorities, and generate a continuing conservation process which must not, however, stifle the evolution of a city which is still far from having acquired its final form. Brasilia today is at a crossroads. It must choose between preserving and strengthening its individuality or, like so many cities which lack a character of their own, become depersonalized. It would be a pity if it were to abandon its undeniable role as a heritage for the future. The decision rests with its citizens and with the authorities.

■ **Briane Elisabeth Panitz Bica**

Photo Georg Gerster © Rapho, Paris

Housing in this residential district of Brasilia contrasts sharply with the bold "futuristic" architecture of the public buildings in the centre of the city, whose population has risen to 300,000 in 24 years. A million more persons live in seven satellite towns.

The vibrant world of Cándido Portinari

by Antonio Carlos Calado

BORN in 1903 into a family of poor Italian immigrants who worked on the coffee plantations in the State of São Paulo, Cándido Portinari won a travelling scholarship in painting which took him to Europe. There he absorbed impressions like a sponge, and recorded what he saw in the great art galleries and exhibitions. On his return home he soon made a name for himself and by 1935 was already well known not only in Brazil but in the United States, where his famous painting, *Coffee,* received favourable notice at the International Exhibition held at Pittsburgh under the sponsorship of the Carnegie Institute. A study of his work was published by the University of Chicago Press in 1940 under the title *Portinari—His Life and Art.*

This book contains many black and white and full colour reproductions, including paintings on social and religious themes and some magnificent portraits which show that he reached the height of his powers at an early age. It also reveals that by this time Portinari had already been acclaimed by no less a person than Rockwell Kent, the American painter, illustrator and writer. Kent (1882-1971) wrote the introduction to the book, and it is still a pleasure to note the enthusiasm with which he welcomed his young colleague from the south. This is how he describes the vision that is central to Portinari's art:

"The world of Portinari: as, compelled by it, in thought, we move about in it, with wonder—fear, perhaps—but with the same acceptance of its macabre elements as our unconscious selves accord the most fantastic dreams that trouble us in sleep, we come gradually to the realization that this is no world of pure imagination but an intensified, fantastic re-creation of the world that Portinari knows, his native land, Brazil. Of this his other paintings are the evidence. In them we see the landscape, tread the soil; we see its workers and their poverty—not agonized about, just told. And told with love. Not love for poverty and unremitted toil, but love for woman, man, and child—who, rich or poor, to him are lovable. He paints them trustfully. 'Blessed are the meek' would seem to be his utterance from his heart. And if the conditions of their life on their Brazilian earth would seem to us to be no great inheritance, they by their goodness make life seem worthwhile. They work; they marry and rear families; their children play. And of their happiness, of the happiness of carefree children at their play, there are no paintings in the treasury of art more eloquent".

Thus wrote Rockwell Kent about the great Brazilian painter in 1940. I have just been looking in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1972 edition) for the article on Portinari. There is none, and the entry on Brazil contains only two lines about him. On the other hand Rockwell Kent is the subject of an excellent article, running to more than twenty lines and accompanied by a reproduction of one of his pictures, *The Trapper.* And yet if Kent has a certain position in the art and culture of the United States, it is in no way comparable to that occupied by Portinari in the painting and culture of Brazil and Latin America. The tribute which Kent paid him in 1940 was prophetic. Portinari's art continued to develop until the end of his life.

Photos © Portinari Project, Rio de Janeiro

Coffee (1935), oil on canvas, by Cándido Portinari. After winning an award at the Pittsburgh International Festival the painting was acquired by the National Museum of Fine Arts of Brazil.

Cangaceiro, ***oil on canvas (1951). Amélia and Leao Gondim de Oliveira Collection.***

No painter of comparable stature has appeared in Brazil since his death in 1962. During the first half of the present century two Brazilian artists, each working in a different art-form, enriched their country's culture and enhanced its international standing. They were Portinari and—in music—Villa-Lobos. To add the name of Oscar Niemeyer, the architect of Brasilia, is to define the area in which the Brazilian cultural sensibility has spread and influenced the sensibilities of other peoples. But there is no doubt that it is Portinari who best and most directly illustrates the Brazilian phenomenon, and by "illustrate" I mean describing a country in figurative terms.

For reasons of personal taste some people may think that other Brazilian painters are more important than Portinari, but no one would deny his absolute primacy as the painter of Brazil as a whole. The monumental heritage of Portinari's work is gradually being recorded, photographed and catalogued as part of the Portinari Project (see "Unesco Newsroom", *Unesco Courier,* August 1983). The Project gives an idea of the artist's impressive output of more than 4,000 works on social themes—São Paulo peasants, migrants from the poverty-stricken *Nordeste,* cowhands, labourers, popular musicians—as well as religious and historical paintings, and portraits.

Portinari produced flawless masterpieces in each of these fields, including murals which alone would have brought fame to less prolific artists. Two enormous works by him, *War* and *Peace,* can be seen in the entrance hall of the United Nations ▶

ANTONIO CARLOS CALADO *is a Brazilian novelist and playwright. His best-known novel is* Quarup. *A film based on his widely acclaimed play* Pedro Mico *is currently being made. The author of one of the most comprehensive and reliable biographies of Cándido Portinari, he was awarded the Goethe prize for literature in 1983.*

Armando Reverón: a lust for light

by Juan Calzadilla

FOR Latin Americans of yesterday, the only conceivable tradition to which the work of an artist seeking recognition could be related was that of European art and, more specifically, of modern European art. This was a field in which everything was alien to us, but we were quick to assimilate. Techniques, tools, industrial materials and concepts were taken, and sometimes snatched, from European art by our artists and academies and applied unchanged, except for the visual content, i.e. the subjects, as part of the artist's search for a place of some kind (even at the cost of losing a kind of hallmark of *Latin Americanism)* within the chronology of international art. Our modernity was based on offshoots of Impressionism and on what Herbert Read aptly called "the tyranny of the eye" which the Renaissance imposed upon all modern European (and by extension Latin American) art.

If the work of the Venezuelan artist Armando Reverón (1889-1954) is considered against this historical background it can be seen to represent a revolt against the Impressionist tradition in which a whole generation of artists were brought up and in which Reverón himself was trained. It is only in his early works, produced between 1908 and 1920, that there is a point of view familiar to an eye unaccustomed to the light of the tropics.

In accordance with tradition, Reverón accepted the rules of the game by completing his youthful studies at Caracas Academy where he acquired the conventional knowledge which, talented as he was, and capable of taking all kinds of risks, he exploited in the remarkable achievements of his first period, which lasted until about 1920.

Photo © Damián Bayón, Paris

Self-Portrait with Dolls *(1950).* *Pencil, charcoal and pastel on paper, by Armando Reverón (1889-1954).*

A journey to Spain and to Paris led him to reflect on the deterministic influence of Europe on a dependent culture like ours, incapable of creating its own models (how far is this still true?). From this time (1915-1916) onwards, Reverón became obsessed with the idea of creating an art outside the official framework, rejecting conventional doctrines, traditional ethics, and standardized habits of interpretation which had taught people to assess values by reference to European models ("Ah, he is not as good as Monet, but you can see that he has seen Monet!").

Reverón realized that the basis for this revolt lay, if not in change of social structures—which was a lot to ask for—at least in a change in the pattern for individual behaviour. A deep-rooted need to isolate himself and to draw close to nature led him to settle in a spot (half desert at that time) on the coast near Caracas. Here he lived in contact with nature a life that was simplified to such primitive extremes that eventually his physical resistance broke down, leading to madness; here, between 1952 and 1953 he accomplished powerful works, both concentrated and boundless, skilful and yet dense, which seem to have been torn from the light which served as his central figure rather than an object (the incandescent light of our environment seen face to face and created on a stage dramatized by the deep reflection of the energy hidden in matter, in continuous movement). ■

JUAN CALZADILLA, *Venezuelan poet, art critic, and university teacher, is a long-serving member of his country's museographical service. He is the author of a number of books including a major bibliography on the arts of Venezuela and a* catalogue raisonné *of the work of Armando Reverón.*

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▶ building in New York. Thanks to these two paintings, to Kent's book, and to the two-volume work by Eugenio Luraghi published in Italy (one of them is devoted to Portinari's visit to Israel and the attractive works it inspired) art-lovers everywhere can appreciate the genius of this Brazilian painter who was so important an interpreter of his country's culture.

Portinari's stature in Brazil has continued to grow since his death. He has been the subject of a steady flow of newspaper articles, essays, and studies not only in his own country but also in the international press. And even if there is a certain indifference towards the Third World, as illustrated by the shocking example of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* Portinari's prestige continues to grow in Brazil.

Of all artistic manifestations it is painting, perhaps, which provides the clearest evidence that the great works of today will provide our psychological substance tomorrow.

Cándido Portinari is the painter who in his canvases and murals forged the consciousness of the Brazilian people with the greatest assurance. The success he enjoyed during his lifetime and his posthumous fame stem from the fact that he gave an entire people the instruments of its vision.

■ **Antonio Calado**

The bread (and butter) art of Ecuador

Photos © Silvie Fischer, Nyon, Switzerland

"... Flowers, garlands of leaves and petals like silk..."

WHILE the arts of jewellery and pottery, of leatherwork and woodwork, of metal and wool, are practised in virtually all the countries of Latin America, it seems that the figurines made from flour paste, popularly known as "bread figures", are found only in Ecuador, where they are produced in the little town of Calderón some fifteen kilometres north of Quito.

In decorating the figures, which reproduce elements from the environment and daily life, the creative artists of Calderón shun the easy temptation of realism. In a sense they yield to realism when they fashion human figures—Indian men beside grazing sheep, Indian women sitting beside sacks of fruit in an imaginary market. But the animals they model belong to the world of plants as much as to the world of animals: llamas, horses, bulls, parrots, tortoises and even fish (which do not exist in the region) have big flowers, garlands of leaves and petals with edges like silk, instead of skin, hair, feathers, or scales. The colours, which are used indiscriminately, are those found in the dress of the local women: orange, green, scarlet, and the blue—between navy blue and sky blue—which the Indians call "colour of dawn".

The figures are the product of domestic and collective craftsmanship. At any hour of the day girls can be found sitting around rough and ready tables in the inner patios of Calderón houses, deftly moulding figures which are identical except for some tiny detail, which may be the result of skill, error or chance. The figures are then lightly baked in an oven or dried in the equatorial sun before being painted. Maybe they are coloured by the same children, but in some cases the mastery of relief or line displayed in the eyebrows or lips of the tiny faces or in the single eye of a llama seen in profile seem like the work of expert adults. Certainly the paste is prepared by the mother and it is she, alone or with her husband, who sells the figures to the public in an increasing number of bigger and bigger shops.

The figures show that fondness for minute detail which is a general characteristic of popular Ecuadorian craftsmanship. Large specimens measuring as much as twenty or thirty centimetres in height are few and are used to decorate walls (their backs being fitted with a piece of wire or string for this purpose). More commonly they measure a mere five or six centimetres, are decorated nonetheless with an extraordinary profusion of detail, and are displayed on shelves or tables. Recently, in response to market demand or in an attempt to expand the market, production has begun of tiny figures of Indians ("Cholas") and llamas fastened to safety pins and sold as women's brooches. In this instance, like that of mirror frames decorated with flower motifs, this art is in a sense utilitarian. However, unlike other forms of craftsmanship the bread figures are works of pure art created with no other end in view than the pleasure to be derived from contemplating, admiring and living among them.

Calderón is little more than two rows of houses, mostly workshops, storehouses and shops where bread figures are sold, on each side of a dusty road. The community lives from tourism. A major draw for the tourists, from Ecuador and other countries, is the proximity of the equator, which is marked at the base of an obelisk (inside which a museum of popular arts is being created) where visitors can be photographed standing with one foot in the northern hemisphere and one foot in the southern hemisphere. Tourism has also brought a host of posters and signs written in an English full of touching spelling mistakes. It has also brought the pressure of a different kind of demand which has led to the recent appearance among the bread figures of portrayals of Father Christmas and Christmas trees. The Calderón artists have long modelled crèches which are authentic reproductions, touched with innocence and originality (the Virgin may be Indian, one of the Magi may have no beard) of those traditionally produced in some European countries. Until recently it was also possible to find clowns whose clothing was the finest example of the artists' consummate skill in depicting tiny details and of richness of colour.

A head and two feet peep out from beneath a plant form crowned by a rose in this bread figure evoking a tortoise.

The bread figures also differ from other forms of traditional craftsmanship whose origins it is difficult to pinpoint in time, in the sense that they can be associated with a specific date and historical period. The date is 1535, when the Flemish priest Fray Jodoco Ricke brought the first ears of corn to Ecuador and taught the people to use wooden ploughs. The period began when the Calderón community had sufficient bread to be able to use some of its flour to fashion these figurines whose ingenuous beauty is a joy for ever, like that of any authentic work of art, although in this case their lives are usually short. The figurines are extremely fragile and in certain regions, especially on the tropical coast, they fall prey to the appetites of ravaging insects.

■ **Jorge Enrique Adoum**

The originality

Photo Michel Claude-Unesco

Small Peruvian retablo or miniature "altar-piece" (each side of the panel measures 13 cm) depicting a village celebration beside a giant cactus. Musicians are shown in the background. Figures in foreground are 3 cm high.

THE great Peruvian writer José María Arguedas asserted that "the popular indigenous art of Peru is the purest expression of the personality of the indigenous Peruvian peoples, their creative genius and their finest artistic traditions. Moreover, this art in all its forms and varieties proves in a most interesting manner how the indigenous peoples absorbed elements of Western culture, and how those elements have been transformed and adapted to the nature of our cultures".

The fusion with Spanish culture produced a form of art that was particularly rich in Mexico and Peru. This is because the most important viceroyalties of the continent were established in those two countries—in the heartlands of the two great empires of the Aztecs and the Incas—which had a centuries-old tradition of craftsmanship. This tradition was rooted in the old indigenous cultures and these were enriched by the Spanish contribution.

In Peru the conquerors encountered a number of different ethnic groups who had survived within the Inca empire. For peoples who had no knowledge of the wheel, the introduction of the potter's wheel by the Spaniards meant a revolution. It enabled local artists to create new techniques and to produce works of extraordinary beauty.

The rich quality of Peruvian handicrafts was maintained during the early centuries of the conquest, and was revealed in all its splendour at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. The Spanish element was by then very diluted. It is at this period that we encounter the principal, or at least the best-known, product of Peruvian craftsmanship—the "Pucará bull". As a symbol of strength and courage the bull was, and still is, typically Spanish, but it was adopted by indigenous craftsmen and is now one of the most important forms of popular art in Latin America.

As we know, the principal animals to be found in the Andes in pre-Columbian times were the llama, the vicuña, the alpaca and the guanaco. Although these animals continued to be modelled in a variety of materials, the figure of the bull, which initially had a ceremonial

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Photo Michel Claude-Unesco

An engraved mate or gourd (diameter 11 cm). A popular celebration in a public square is depicted in the detail shown here. Musicians can be seen in the midst of the crowd.

# of Peruvian popular art

by Manuel Checa Solari

Photo © Jesús García Ruiz

significance, began to be established as typically Peruvian. The "Pucará bull", which is both ornamental and utilitarian, is provided with a handle in the form of a ring on its back, and is commonly used as a flower vase. Its strong, vigorous appearance is more suggestive of an ox. It is made of earthenware in a great variety of sizes and is always painted in white and ochre, with a lock of hair on the forehead and a kind of dewlap in the form of a plait or garland, coloured green. The "Pucará bull" is also manufactured in Quinua.

Equally well-known in Latin America are *retablos* or miniature "altar-pieces". They originated in the city of Ayacucho and are made in the altiplano. They are inspired by Spanish altar-pieces, and the treatment clearly reveals a cultural and artistic fusion. They usually depict religious scenes containing a large number of figures—the Bethlehem crib, Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the Way of the Cross and processions with the Virgin. The figures, which are sometimes no more than 1 or 2 centimetres high, reveal remarkable creative and imaginative powers. They are made from a mixture of plaster and the flour from boiled potatoes, are painted and given a protective coating of colourless enamel. But the subjects depicted in these light wooden cases are not always religious. Bullfights and cockfights are also frequently represented, as are ingenious and sometimes humorous models of hat shops, grocery stores, taverns and other places of popular frequentation.

This "three-dimensional painting" of the square at Cuzco is a variant of the* retablos *produced by the folk artists of Ayacucho, Peru. The sky is painted on wood. The houses with their corners and balconies are of stucco, and the human figures, like those in the* retablos, *are made of a mixture of plaster and cooked potato and are painted and varnished when dry.

Another typical example of Peruvian craftsmanship is the so-called *mate burilado*. This is a dried pumpkin decorated with a multitude of human figures and a profusion of geometrical patterns. Some *mates burilados* may possibly tell a story, true or imaginary, but on account of their circular form and the decoration without beginning or end any attempt at interpretation would be like trying to solve a riddle.

As can be easily imagined, technical advances, like the oven in the case of the "Pucará bulls", and greater commercialization due to the growth of tourism, have somewhat impaired the original purity, beauty, ingenuity and magic of popular art. ■

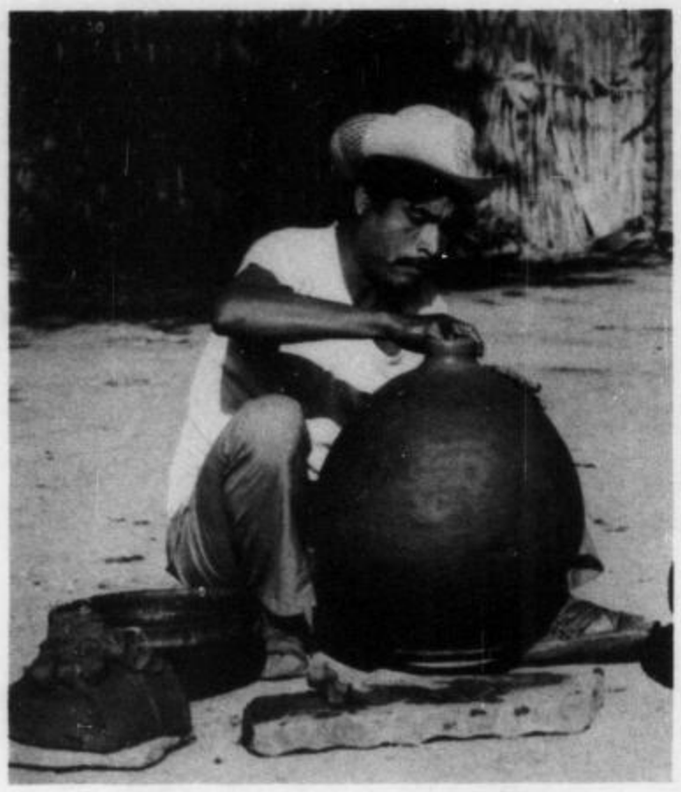
Photo Michel Claude-Unesco

This decorated earthenware "Pucará bull" from Peru stands just under 11 cm high.

The master-craftsmen of Mexico

by Anharad Lanz de Ríos

Writing about the arts of Meso-America, Jacques Soustelle noted: "The décor of life was above all that used, with exceptional skill, in the 'minor' arts for the embellishment of both rare and commonplace objects; from the most unassuming terra-cotta dish to jewellery made of gold nothing was vulgar, there was no impression of work done in haste or merely for effect or profit."



OF all the countries of the American continent, Mexico undoubtedly has the largest number of active craftsmen and the highest level of hand-craft production both in quantity and quality. These popular plastic art forms still reflect residual echoes of the pre-Columbian heritage as well as important Spanish, Asian and universal influences subject to constant adaptation and change.

There are no precise statistics concerning the proportion of the population engaged in hand-crafts in Mexico, but it has been estimated that some one million two hundred thousand heads of households undertake some form of craft activity. Training in the crafts is a part of normal family life and from a very early age children are taught the basic skills which will enable them to master these crafts. Thus, although craft production in Mexico is organized in a number of different ways, the greater part of it is the work of family groups.

There is often a division of labour between men and women. For example, men are seldom involved in the manufacture of textiles. Pottery, too, is women's work with the men confined to transporting the clay and wood and firing the vessels.

In the sixteenth century the Spanish *conquistadores* came across craft centres in Mexico of varying levels of advancement many of which, however, had mastered a number of very advanced techniques, such as the polishing of ceramics. Highly advanced techniques were also employed by goldsmiths and weavers. The Conquest triggered off a vast process of acculturation, giving rise to crafts, such as forging, for example, which in time, despite their strong Spanish roots, came to be looked upon as traditional.

During the period of the Viceroyalties, the crafts could be classified in three groups. In the first group were artistic objects with ancient Mexican motifs and using special techniques and raw materials. These included pottery, jewellery and woven materials. The craftsmen knew and used gold, silver and copper. Among vitreous materials they knew only quartz and obsidian. For weaving they used soft fibres such as cotton and silk, but they had no knowledge of wool.

The second group consisted of the work of indigenous craftsmen whose production was intended to meet their own needs. In this group decorative and manufacturing techniques were not very advanced.

From the interaction of these two groups and the reciprocal influence they had on each other was born the third group which is today known as "traditional *mestizo*". The main characteristics of objects of this type are the low economic value of the raw materials of which they are made and the artistic expression they incorporate. Regardless of their economic value and the quantities produced, all the crafts mentioned above still survive in present-day Mexico.

Today the so-called "Mexican curio", or "airport art", with its reduced production times and costs, presents a distorted image of authentic popular craftsmanship. By the very nature of their production organization, coupled with the lack of raw materials, the authentic crafts find it difficult to compete on even terms. Nevertheless, the staunch resistance of the craft groups and the deeply-rooted craft tradition make of Mexico a country outstanding for the rich variety of craft objects produced. ■

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The dance of death

by Miguel Rojas-Mix

EVERY year on the second of November Mexicans eat death. They consume it in the form of sugar skulls and savour it in confectionery. Children play with death, manipulating skeletons with string and making them dance. They amuse themselves with little figures called *padrecitos* ("little fathers"), which have a chickpea for a head, or make death jump out of a cardboard coffin like a jack-in-a-box. In fact, the whole country moves to the rhythm of an enormous dance of death: shop windows, cyclists, toys, couples dressed up in wedding costumes. Everything is transformed into a *calavera,* a word which in Mexican Spanish means not only a skull (as it does in Castilian Spanish) but a whole skeleton.

Eros and Thanatos, love and death. On the second of November death succumbs to the pleasures of life and calls on craftsmen to depict death in order to help those who mourn the dead. In other words death becomes a source of livelihood for the confectioners who fashion the traditional sugar *calaveras* and inscribe on the foreheads the names of relatives of their customers, and for the potters of Oaxaca, Santa Fé de la Laguna and Michoacán who make incense burners for the altars to the dead or floral decorations for tombs. It provides a living for those who make the little black glazed bulls surrounded by candles and *zempasuchitl* flowers which are found at Puebla, multi-coloured images of souls, earthenware toys with skeleton drummers from Guanajuato, and coaches with musical skeletons from Metepec.

In death two traditions meet to form the basis of the Mexican identity—the indigenous pre-Cortesian tradition, and the Spanish. The former has left us marvellous artefacts such as skulls carved in rock crystal, the finest example of which is Coatlicué, the Aztec goddess of the earth and of life, depicted with a skull-like face. This tradition is preserved in the Mexican sense of life, which is quite different from that of the Old World. For the Mexican, death is not something frightful but a necessary prelude to resurrection. In the cosmic cycle it engenders life.

Death is also embraced in the European—especially the Spanish—mystical tradition, in the *danse macabre* evoked in the poetry of François Villon and the engravings of Holbein and popularized in Latin America through Baroque art. The *calavera* called in question the power and riches of this world. It is shown carrying away kings, bishops and peasants and thus restoring human equality. As the fifteenth-century Spanish poet Jorge Manrique wrote:

> Popes and emperors
> Prelates and poor shepherds
> There, death treats them all alike.

In the engravings of José Guadelupe Posada death is transformed into an image of the Mexican people. The *pelona* ("bald one") as she is popularly called, goes off to the Revolution with Zapata, brandishes a sword, weeps, dances, eats spicy meat dishes, and gets drunk on *pulque*. Posada's skeletons are corrosive precisely because they form part of an ancient tradition of social criticism associated with death. In his *La Quijotita y su Prima* (1818) Fernández de Lizardi tells us that it was the custom on the second of November to send leaflets to politicians and people of standing anticipating the dates of their deaths and presenting an obituary notice. These leaflets which described how the "deceased" had lived were called *calaveras.*■

The Venezuelan writer and art critic Mariano Picón Salas observed how the Mexican people "by force of wisdom and experience play with death in order to grow accustomed to it without fear".

Calavera of a Zapatist Revolutionary *by José Guadalupe Posada (1851-1913).*

Photo © Dover Publications-Photeb

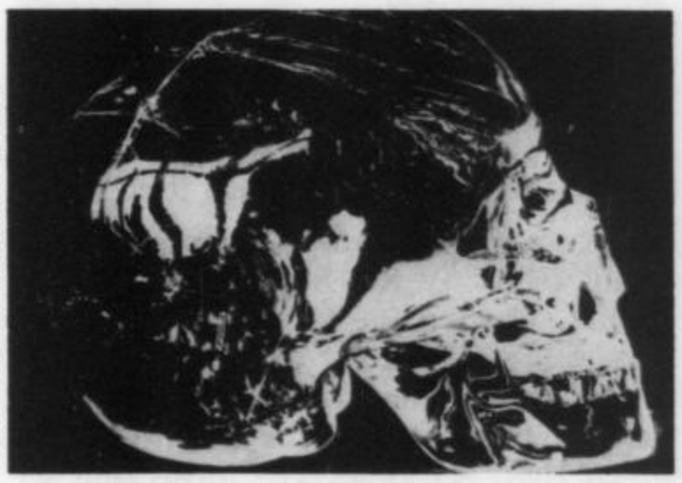

Photo © British Museum, London

The famous Aztec skull carved from rock crystal which is now preserved in the British Museum, London. Aztec lapidaries cut hard stones with tools made of wood, plant fibres, and emery.

Photo © Almasy, Paris

Imposing plastic "calaveras" (death figures) of musicians in Mexico City.

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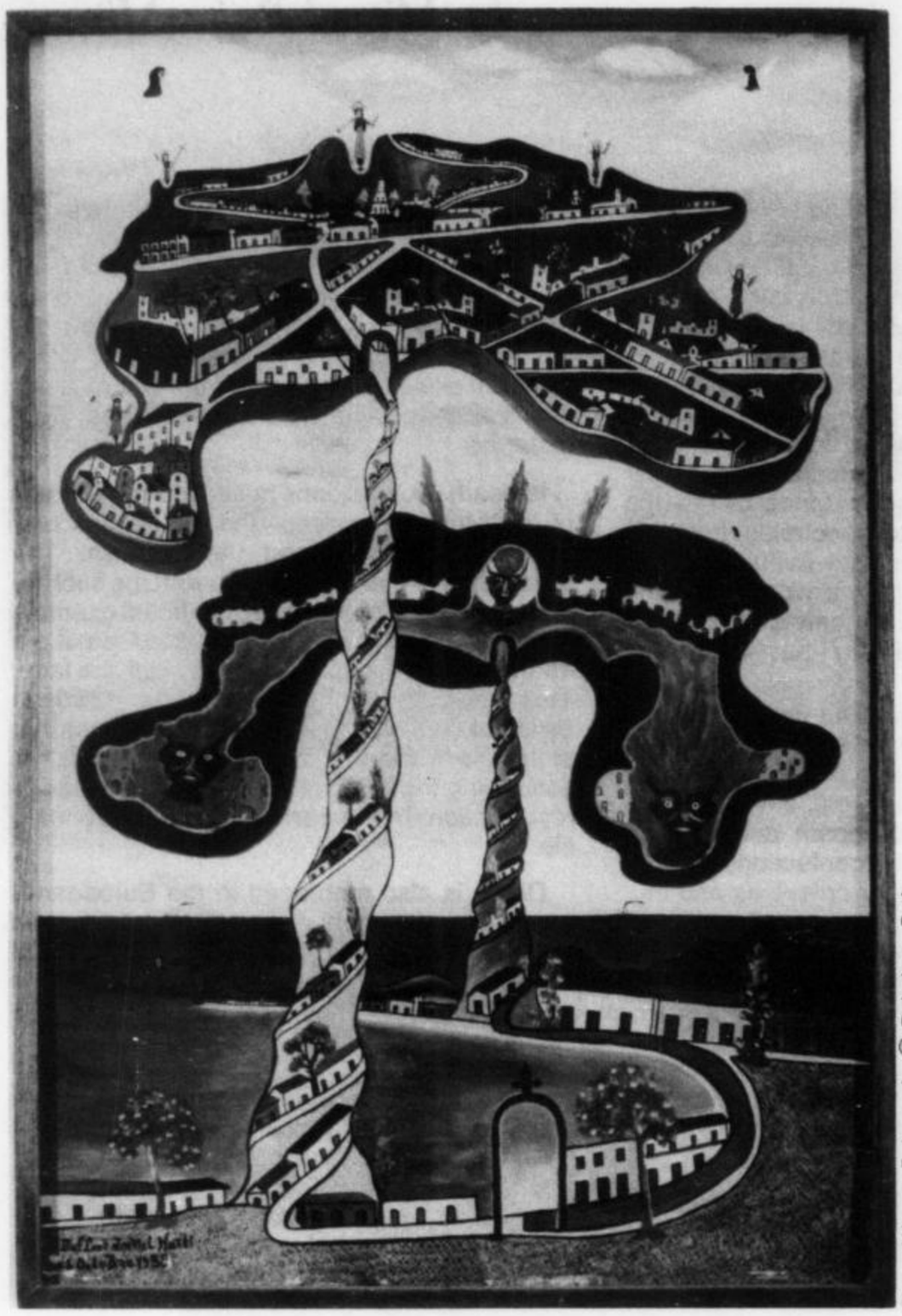
Castles in the air

Haiti's painters of high spirits

by René Depestre



Heaven and Earth ***(1959) by the Haitian painter Préfète Duffaut. Usually constructed from rising columns of matter in a state of flux, Duffaut's landscapes are inspired by the town of Jacmel, where he was born.***

Photo Warren E. Leon Jr. © Delroisse, Paris

IT all began one April day in 1943. The English teacher during our final year at the Lycée Pétion was a North American of Dutch origin, DeWitt Peters. He was mild-mannered, genial, competent. Every now and then a cloud of sadness and nostalgia would suddenly pass across his mocking eyes. He would stop teaching and talk to us about his dreams. The last time he did so he announced to his young pupils and friends that he was going to give up teaching and devote all his energies to painting. Had he taken leave of his senses? He was tired of being a Sunday painter, and a full-time painter was taking possession of his hands like a *loa* (a supernatural being—a god or demon, spirit or genie) in the head of an adept of voodoo. Those of us who liked him were saddened by his departure, and found it hard to get down to our English studies again.

A year later, in May 1944, the *Centre d'Art Haitien* at Port-au-Prince, directed by the same DeWitt Peters, held its first exhibition. One of the most exuberant movements in twentieth-century art was beginning to grow.

To the unknowns who came to his studio, Peters offered a working space, canvas or paper, brushes and tubes of colour. In addition to these tools and materials he also gave technical advice: academic notions of drawing, and the application of the seven "souls" of the rainbow.

The men who came to Peters tended to be cobblers, barbers, taxi-drivers, fishing-boat builders, house-painters, tailors, voodoo priests, servants, hawkers. Those who had already handled a paintbrush (like the housepainter Hector Hyppolite, one of the first masters of the movement) had done so to decorate doors, trunks, windows, trucks, domestic objects and objects used in voodoo ritual.

These men who had come straight from the itinerant mysteries of Haitian reality would in the next few years hurl a dazzling system of pictorial forms at the face of the world. *Loa* took over painting as such gods as Baron Samedi, Dambalah Ouédo, Agoué, Ogou Badagris, Shango and Erzuli Fréda-Dahomin, a thousand leagues away from the Italian Renaissance, Cézanne and Picasso, gave the popular surrealism of the Haitians the chance to express itself.

The imaginations of Hector Hyppolite, Philomé Obin, Rigaud Benoît, Wilson Bigaud, Castera Bazile, Préfète Duffaut, Louverture Poisson, Jasmin Joseph, Micius Stephane and a dozen more began to transform into painting the dream-world in which Haiti is rooted. The forms thus set free experienced frenzy, ecstasy, unbridled fantasy, universal generosity, and a fulgurating harmony with new climates of a literally bedazzled collective imagination. Then, working with phantasmagoric patience, a whole people of artists made a fantastic inventory, of breath-taking lyrical freshness, of the slightest details of the Haitian reality and dream. Other masters joined the ranks of those named above: J.E. Gourgue, Antonio Joseph, Casimir Laurent, Senèque Obin, André Pierre, Dieudonné Cédor, Gérard Valcin, Robert St. Brice. And other hands, from all over Haiti, which were enduring the terrible works and days of a crucified people, joined in this rebellious exuberance of a lust for life as rich in thermal energy as the sun itself.

It is a movement in the full, dynamic sense of the term; even the *tap-tap* (buses) which drive on the country's rough roads have not escaped the painterly frenzy of those who use them. The itinerant gods watch over every crossroads as biblical scenes mingle with scenes from a desperate everyday life. In Haiti the imaginary has *tap-tap* wheels, it performs feats of acrobacy in joining the two extremes of a possessed and a possessing reality, a frenzied reality, a reality best not met on a dark night. The Haitian painters, however, courageously set forth to meet it and to cast in its teeth the strokes of a brush moistened with tenderness and beauty. In this way a masked world withstands the daily assaults of poverty and the difficulty of being Haitian in one's native Haiti or anywhere else. The mad gods of painting still drive too fast on Haiti's dusty roads. Where are the "naive painters" in this wild light? Assuredly there has never been a "naive" phenomenon in Haiti. It was as a result of a dubious tourist craze that the label of "naivety" was tied to the creative phenomenon which possesses the Haitian visual imagination. To celebrate this Haitian renaissance as a poet, I humbly follow the example of Apollinaire as he contemplated the paintings of the Douanier Rousseau. Masters of the marvellous in Haiti, great itinerant *loas* of joy and pain, I invite the world to watch "your baggage pass freely through the gate of heaven". ■

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The artistic ferment of a continent

by Carlos Rodríguez Saavedra

FOR more than four centuries Latin American art has reflected both the impact, the imposition or the variously assimilated influence of the Western system over a vast area originally inhabited by indigenous peoples of a variety of cultures, and the beginning of a slow, complex process of hybridization. Latin America is a prolonged historical assertion of a vast plurality, open to all the world's cultural manifestations but capable of absorbing them without impairing its identity.

The characteristic feature of Latin American painting in general from 1920 onwards was the rejection of academic precepts and their replacement to a greater or lesser extent by *avant-garde* trends. Many painters from the Andean and tropical countries decided at an early stage to express indigenous national or regional themes in the new idiom. In Mexico, painting was also to be used as a means of political and nationalistic expression. The mural painting associated with the revolution in that country began as a form of glorification and finally became a vehicle of criticism and controversy.

Because of their volume and importance the works of Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros occupy a special place in the history of Latin American art. They also demonstrate the capacity of the American world for cultural syncretism. With deliberate anti-Western emphasis, they use Western painting techniques and idioms to express Mexican nationalism and reassert the country's Aztec past. In monumental style and descriptive virulence, the works of Rivera displayed in public buildings, especially in the National Palace in Mexico City, attain a grandeur hitherto unknown in Latin American painting.

By contrast, the works of Clemente Orozco are devoid of rhetoric and figurative detail, but in their plenitude and tragic intensity they represent the highest achievement of painting during this period. Like the painter himself, the work of David Alfaro Siqueiros was violently concerned with revolutionary politics and has been the subject of much ▶

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DIEGO RIVERA (1886-1957). ▶ *The Conquest of Mexico: the true portrait of Hernán Cortés and the enslavement of the Indians*. Fresco, 1929-1935, National Palace, Mexico City.

Along with other mural painters, such as José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros, Diego Rivera was a successor of José Guadalupe Posada. This mural offers a new vision of the past—the Conquest as seen by those who were its victims. The re-interpretation of history from this standpoint and the reconciliation of the pre-Columbian tradition with modern times were two of the great themes of the Mexican revolution, and it was from them that present-day Mexican art was born.

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▲**JOSE CLEMENTE OROZCO** (1883-1948). *The Slave*. Oil on canvas, 1947.

"Ours is the only way" declared David Alfaro Siqueiros, the leader, with Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, of the great Mexican muralist movement. Orozco, however, distanced himself somewhat from the others, rejecting the demagogic, "folklore" aspects of the movement, preferring to give free rein to his highly personal conception of painting. In his polemical *Carta a Orozco* (Open Letter to Orozco) Siqueiros acknowledged that he had created "the finest plastic forms that heralded the Mexican movement". Guatemalan art critic Luis Cardona y Aragón declared that Orozco was the most important artist to come out of Latin America.

▶controversy. However, perhaps because of the controversies it provoked, the revolutionary period and the mural paintings associated with it have served as a starting-point for contemporary Mexican painting. If these paintings had not existed to serve as a basis or a challenge to be rejected or surpassed, the works of such painters as Rufino Tamayo, José Luis Cuevas or—because of the vast scope they have opened up for Mexican art—of more recent artists, would be inconceivable.

In Brazil the new art burst on the public with the challenging "Modern Art Week" in São Paulo in February, 1922. The conjugation of *avant-garde* initiatives in literature, music and the plastic arts by Oswaldo de Andrade, Anita Malfatti, Mario de Andrade, Tarsila de Amaral, Lasar Segall, Victor Brocheret and Emiliano Di Cavalcanti, amongst others, was primarily aimed at asserting the right to aesthetic revolt and freedom of expression. At the same time, by using the conquests of the European "isms" these artists came to the rescue of personal, popular and national values.

The international recognition and official support accorded a few years later to Cándido Portinari demonstrated the extent to which this aesthetic revolt, in addition to changing the orientation of art, had gained solid ground in the country. Born and bred amongst the cotton and coffee plantations, Cándido Portinari remained faithful until the end of his life to the images of his childhood. His masterly series of murals for the Ministry of Education in Rio de Janeiro demonstrate, in an integrated pictorial idiom combined with a personal style, his capacity to use freely the vocabulary of Cubism, Expressionism and even Surrealism to represent the country's regions, ethnic types and products. The main features of his work were described by Mario de Andrade as traditionalism, lyricism, realism and nationalism.

Meanwhile in the Caribbean Amelia Peláez, a powerful Cuban artist who had assimilated and selectively rejected in Paris the teachings of such masters as André Lhote, was using the formal achievements of Cubism to express typically tropical themes, especially in her still-lifes. Just about this time another Cuban, Wifredo Lam, was setting out on his journey through the world of painting, taking with him ancestral elements which, thanks to his contacts with Picasso and the Surrealists, he would later release in images that were strange to Western art.

At the opposite extreme, painting in Argentina and Uruguay, having no pre-Hispanic roots or nationalist or political commitments, developed from the beginning within the main currents of Western art. Emilio Petorutti, who had lived in Florence since 1913, returned to Buenos Aires in 1924 enriched not only by his study of the 15th century masters but by his friendship with the leaders of the new "Futurism". At the time of his return he had achieved a

◀ **DAVID ALFARO SIQUEIROS** (1898-1974). *The Kiss.*

The eager impetuosity with which Siqueiros lived his life, a life full of incident, of ups and downs and adventures, was also the driving force in his artistic work, in the service of his revolutionary ideas. His murals, like those of those two other great Mexican muralists Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, adorn the walls of many public buildings in his own country (for example, his famous 450-square-metre mural *La Revolución Mexicana)* as well as in Chile and in Cuba. Influenced by Expressionism and Surrealism, Siqueiros' work is inspired particularly by social and proletarian problems.

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▲ **RENE PORTOCARRERO** (1912-). *Carnival,* Gouache, 1970.

Cuba is the focus of René Portocarrero's preoccupations—Havana, its folklore, its fiestas, the Afro-Cuban tradition. In his urban landscapes, in which are to be found echoes of the stained-glass window and the baroque tradition characteristic of the island, the houses seem to move to the rhythm of form and colour. Portocarrero works mainly on three themes—portraits of Flora, the carnival and the town—three images and a style which are his contribution to the Cuban identity.

▲ **JORGE CAMACHO** (1934-). *L'Ornéoscope.* Oil on canvas, 1981.

For Camacho death is a dance to the rhythm of the rumba. For Cubans the Angel of Death is a lifelong companion. Camacho's world is a charnel-house. His ossuaries in metamorphosis are surrealism impregnated with African rites; they recall both Breton and Chango (a Voodoo deity), are both playful and macabre, and in them are echoes of Bosch, Goya and, above all, of José Guadalupe Posada.

mastery of the forms established by Braque, and especially of the synthetic Cubism introduced by Juan Gris. During this period others, including Horacio Butler, Juan del Prete, Héctor Basaldúa, Antonio Berni, Raúl Soldi, Raquel Forner and Lino Eneas Spilimbergo, made a decisive contribution to the establishment of modern art in Argentina in works which demonstrated individual creative assimilation of the main currents represented in the Paris School.

Uruguay's contribution to the Latin American art of this period is represented by the work of two quite dissimilar artists. Pedro Figari crowned a rich career successfully devoted to a variety of humanistic activities by exploiting the Post-Impressionist vein opened up by Bonnard. Joaquín Torres García, whose reputation has continued to grow since his death in Montevideo in 1949, embodies the highest achievement of Latin American art at this period.

His life, marked by sojourns and experiments in many cities—Barcelona, New York, Paris, Montevideo—was continuously devoted to intellectual and artistic investigation aimed at solving a fundamental problem: that of the relationship between reality, which painting normally represents, and the absolute which it aspires to reveal, between the fleeting image and the eternal idea. In opposition to the transient and the descriptive, Torres García elaborated his theory of "Constructive Universalism". In his books *Metafísica de la Prehistorica Indoamericana* and *Estructura* he analyses the fundamental principles of ancient American art and postulates constructive principles for the new art. Inspired by this model, he invented a symbolic alphabet or constructive cryptography whose aim was to give universally valid expression to man and reality.

The work of the so-called *indigenista* painters in Peru between 1920 and 1940 was a response, not only to a social reality but also to an aesthetic demand—to create an art form with its own meaning and importance, rooted in native images and values, and through this art to restore to the indigenous inhabitant and his milieu their original rightful role in Peruvian culture. From 1920 onwards José Sabogal assembled around his painting and doctrines a group of pupils that included Julia Codesido, Enrique Camino Brent and Camilo Blas, who formed the nursery of *indigenista* art. For the first time Peruvian painting was devoted exclusively to recording and representing people, customs, architecture and landscape, especially amongst the Andean communities and in the interior.

Armando Reverón is undoubtedly the greatest name in Venezuelan art of this period. After his studies in the academies of Madrid and Barcelona the work of Reverón in his native country is a true reflection of his personality, compounded of total dedication and demand, which in its last phase could be defined as absolute illuminism. Derived from an Impressionism that progressively discarded nearly every ▶

▲ **HERVE TELEMAQUE** (1937-). *Tribute to the Equals Sign*. Collage, 1983.

The Haitian artist Hervé Télémaque studied in the United States of America from 1957 to 1960 before settling in Paris in 1961. Influenced at first by the lyrical abstractions of the American school, he has since returned to the fundamentals of surrealism (Chirico, Magritte) which has led him to discover the object as an important element in the urban landscape.

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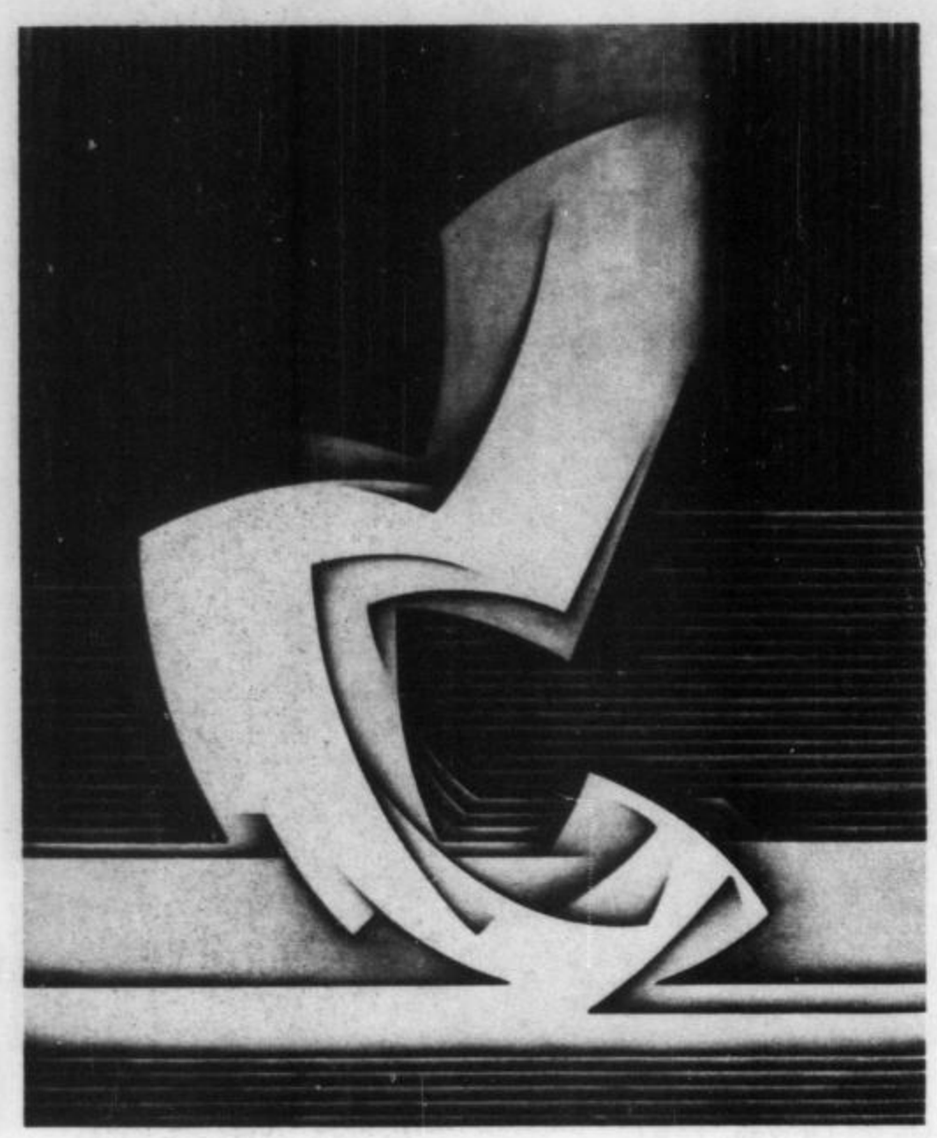

▲ **JOAQUIN FERRER** (1929-). *Restless Space*. Oil on canvas, 1978.

In 1960, the Cuban painter and engraver Joaquin Ferrer came to Paris on a government grant to study painting. There he came into contact with surrealist groups and has since developed his career there with a number of collective and one-man exhibitions. Ferrer's graceful "geometric" designs, usually in two distinct tones, have the ordered aspect of vegetation that is both lush and restrained.

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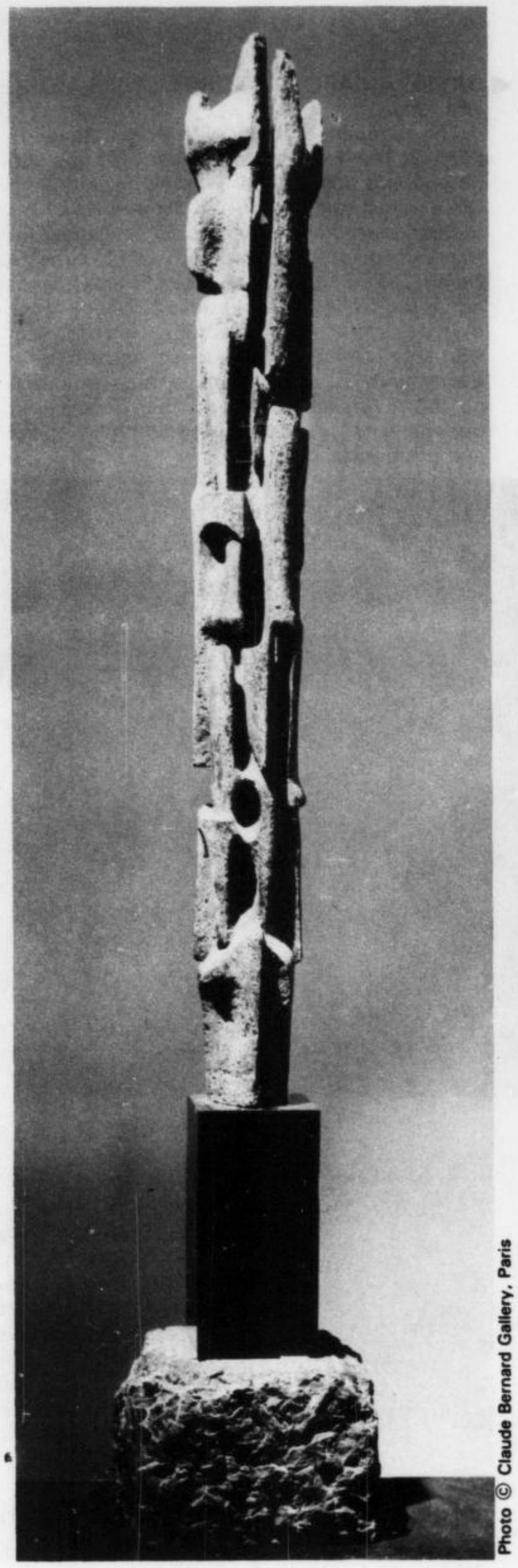

ALICIA PENALBA (1918-1982). ▶ *Great Vegetation Liturgy*. Bronze, 1957.

After winning the prize for painting at the National Exhibition at Buenos Aires, her native city, Alicia Penalba moved to Paris in 1947. It was at this time that she turned to sculpture. From the beginning her style was founded on basic forms. Her first series of sculptures, entitled "Totems", seems to evoke great petrified plant forms, such as the giant cacti to be found on the flanks of the Andean cordillera. Her later works retain this plant-like, architectural quality.

Photo © Claude Bernard Gallery, Paris

▶ kind of objective support, his so-called "white" and "ochre" periods identify the dazzling light of the Caribbean with the very reason for painting.

The Second World War brought Latin America closer to European trends. Even where art was concerned the conflict lent a new, magnified dimension to Europe in the Latin American consciousness. Furthermore, because of the war a number of artists who had been formed in the Paris School returned to their native countries. The presence and contribution—conceptual freedom and formal experimentation—of some of these painters played a lasting role in the modernization and Westernization of Latin American painting. The postwar period, especially from the 1950s onwards, was marked by another development. The centre of artistic experiment moved to New York and, starting in the mid-1950s, that city began to exercise a powerful influence on young Latin American artists both as a centre for the diffusion of new trends and as a pole of attraction.

The scope and variety of Latin American art was sustained and even intensified throughout the period of renewal that started about 1960. During these years a style of painting was defined in most of the Latin American countries which responded creatively to their specific cultural circumstances through full assimilation of contemporary aesthetic postulates. In the leading artists of this period identification of substance with form, the assumption of meaning by the vehicle of its expression, produces that revelation of hitherto unknown contents—an opening to forms of life previously culturally felt but not yet given objective visual expression—which is typical of authentic artistic creations. This is true of Wifredo Lam, Rufino Tamayo and Roberto Matta.

Thanks to his own creative urge and to the "tools" supplied by *avant-garde* trends, Tamayo, who received his early training during the last stage of Mexican muralism, escaped from the political and nationalistic limitations of revolutionary art. Post-Cubism enabled him to break down form and liberate its content. This is essentially evocative of magical, mythical, pre-Columbian or folk symbolism. But it is his aesthetic ability to transform this material into structured forms of refined chromatic lyricism that make it a work of art. This explains why, while affirming that he per-

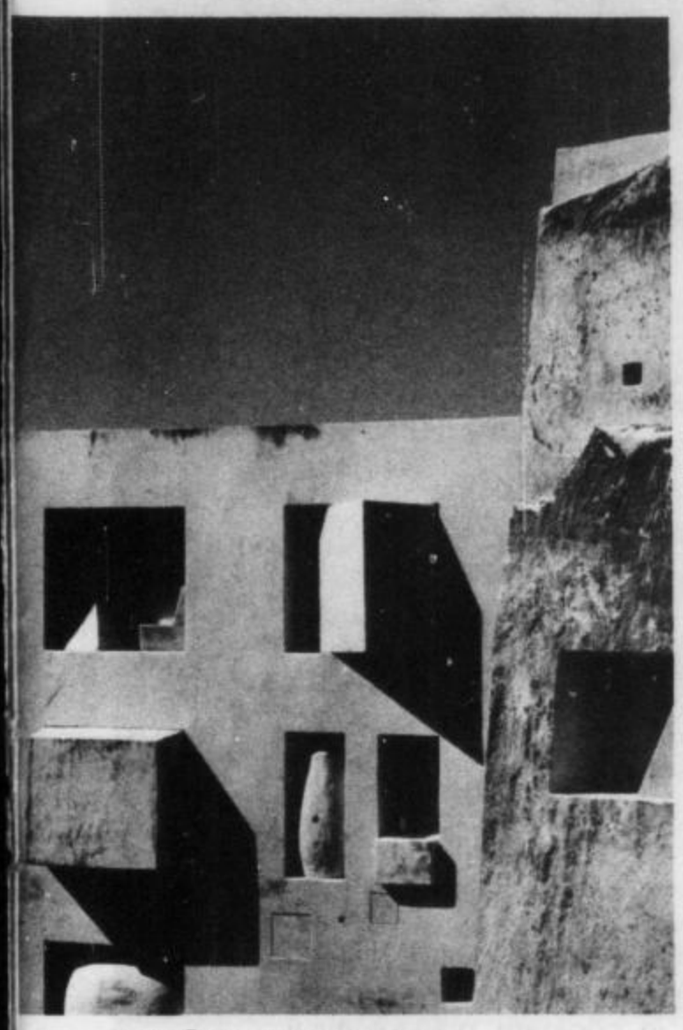

Photo © Damián Bayón, Paris

◀ **GONZALO FONSECA** (1922-). *Sculpture.* Marble, 1970.

Architecture? Fantastic constructions? Rather we should think in terms of enigmas, of timelessness, of metaphysics. Fonseca has assimilated the example of Torres García and transposed it to sculpture. His works, like those of García, seem to be imbued with a cosmic feeling. For Fonseca, "humanist constructivism" means seeing the block as living-space. Reliefs, symbols, epochs are integrated in the unity of form and the compactness of volume, yet they are differentiated as different worlds because they are constructed on different scales.

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◀ **ANTONIO FRASCONI** (1919-). *Comes the Storm.* Wood-engraving.

For years now the Uruguayan artist Antonio Frasconi has been one of Latin America's most outstanding xylographers. Resident for many years in the United States of America, where he works and teaches, Frasconi has brought to his coloured wood-engravings a style which strives to go beyond the normal limits of this medium to achieve the delicacy of an oriental painting, yet with no loss of strength and firmness of line.

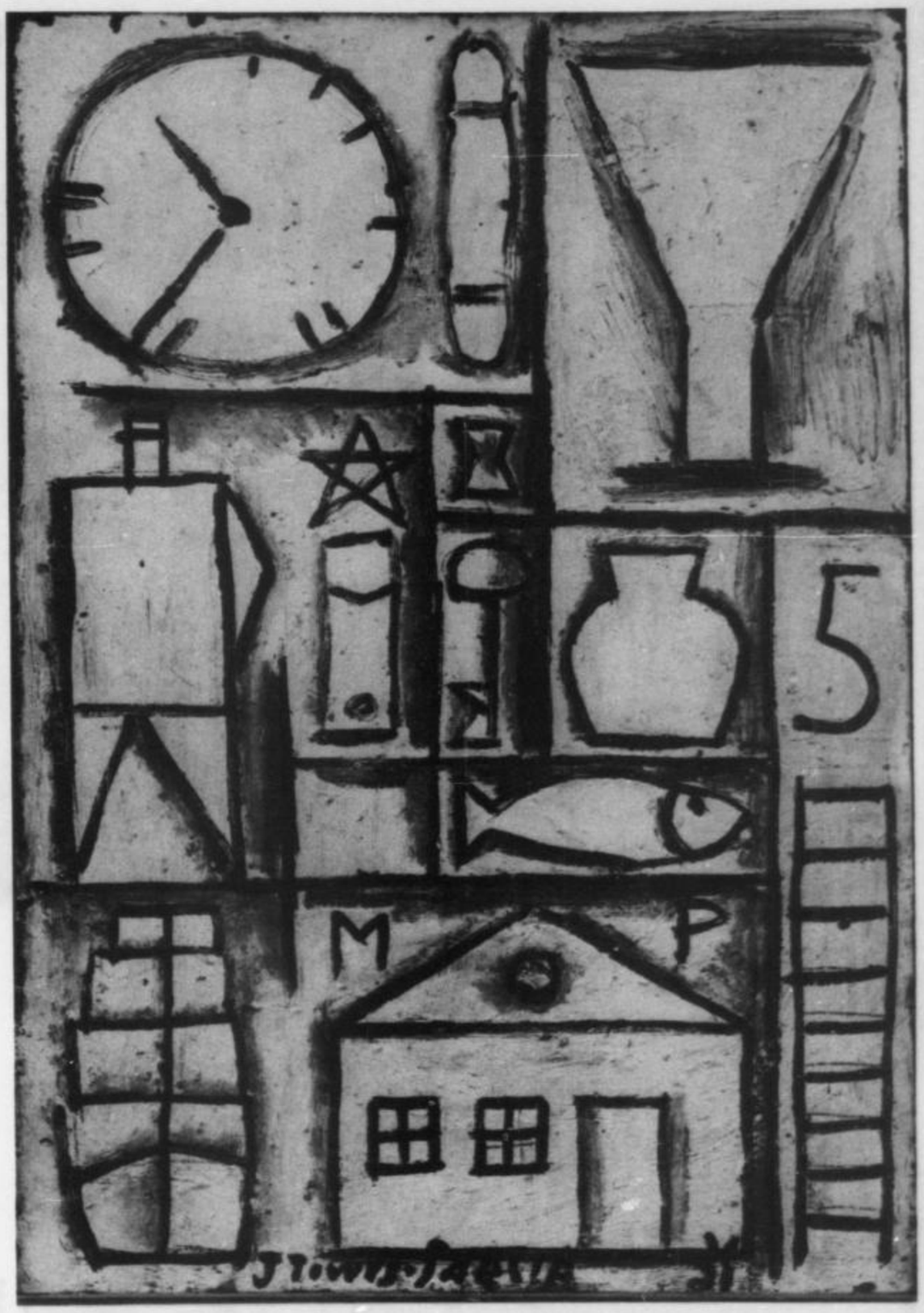

Photo © André Morain, Paris

▲ **JOAQUIN TORRES GARCIA** (1874-1949). *White Constructive.* 1931.

In 1891, at the age of seventeen, Torres García set out from his native city of Montevideo—to which he was not to return until 1934—on a crucial odyssey which took him to the Barcelona and the Paris of the first three decades of the century and to the discovery of the most vital currents of the European *avant-garde*. His iconoclastic tendencies were already apparent in a note written during his youthful days in Barcelona: "Nothing is more wonderful than to forget the past and to set out in search of adventure. I am the enemy of all traditions, whatever they may be." Drawing inspiration from the work of Van Doesburg and Mondrian, Torres García laid the foundations of "constructivism", one of the two or three great movements of twentieth-century Latin American art. His *El Universalismo Constructivista,* published in Buenos Aires in 1944, sums up the purpose of his artistic quest.

sonally has "very deep roots", he can assert that a work of art is "a product that derives its value solely from its plastic qualities, acquired through a process of purification until its essence is obtained".

The paintings of Wifredo Lam demonstrate the catalytic power and disturbing revolutionary effects that a study of Picasso could produce in a young Cuban artist. "What he learned from Picasso and from Oceanic and West African sculpture", writes Gilbert Chase, "bound him to his own Afro-Cuban heritage". For this reason people have tried to see in the work of Lam a direct pictorial expression of the so-called primitive animist and fetichist religions, and of the jungle. This is a simplistic analysis which ignores the indecipherable part of the creative process. In this respect the work of the Cuban artist, like that of Tamayo, reveals an authentic dimension of the cultural infrastructure of Latin America. Compounded of ancient roots given new significance, it produces a disturbing effect. It has an impressive, sombre power.

The effect of Surrealism on Roberto Matta was similar to that of Picasso on Lam. Coming from Chile, a country in the Western tradition, without any pre-Columbian or African cultural heritage but possessed of intense visionary power, Matta has created works that are unusual even in *avant-garde* terms. The originality of his work lies, not in technical or formal innovations, but in the creation of a boundless universe full of strange dynamic energy and peopled by ambiguous, brilliant, erotic, violent, disturbingly fascinating creatures.

The following generation extended the expressive scope of Latin American painting even further, in conditions of growing internationalization. In Ecuador Diógenes Paredes, Eduardo Klingman and Oswaldo Guayasamín, who evolved from *indigenismo* to Expressionism with unparalleled vigour (especially Guayasamín, with his paintings, murals and sculptures) were succeeded by artists like Enrique Tábara, Aníbal Villacís and Oswaldo Viteri, whose work, although purely pictorial, was more complex in content and quality.

After Reverón there was a void in Venezuela which has been filled by a large group of artists, most of whom have acquired and used the language of contemporary painting. In 1955 Jesús Soto (born in 1923) started to use plexiglass for ▶

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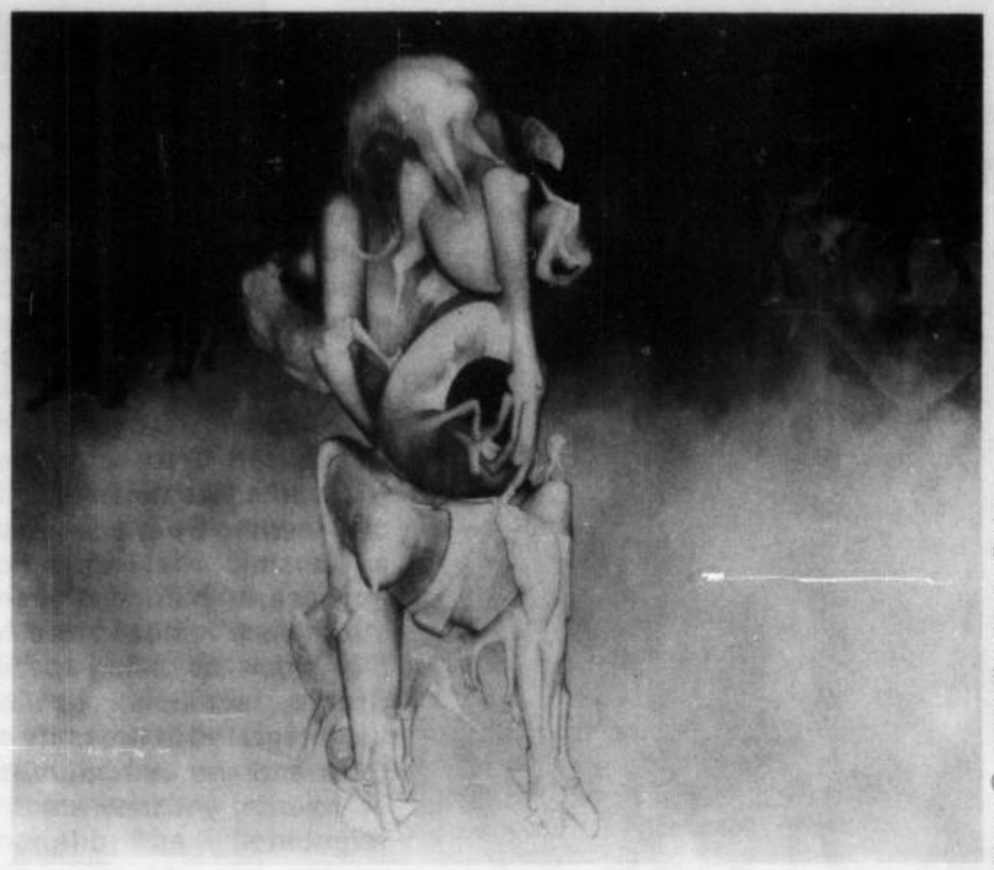


Photo © Jacqueline Hyde, Paris

▲ **GERARDO CHAVEZ** (1937-). *Mother Earth.* Oil on canvas, 1979.

Chávez is a Peruvian artist who has been living in Paris for many years. The all-pervading theme of his work is the imaginary. He creates a world of forms in constant physiological metamorphosis. The cultural roots of this extravagant, forcefully personal painting can be deduced from its echoes of Spanish Baroque as assimilated by Peru, from its echoes, too, of the great painters who fascinated Chávez during his adolescence—Bosch and Brueghel.

◀ **RUFINO TAMAYO** (1899-). *Man with Telephone.* Oil on canvas, 1956.

Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo's early paintings drew their inspiration from the structural and symbolic geometrical forms of pre-Columbian sculpture. Soon, however, his work became less abstract and acquired more movement, his use of colour became more subtle and his subject matter more universal. His unusual studies of the human form came close to surrealism. The French poet and writer André Breton said of him that he raised the humdrum daily round to the realms of ritual and poetry.

▶ compositions which, through the inter-relation and interplay of planes, produced a remarkable impression of optical vibration, with similar but more subtle results than those previously achieved in experiments in geometrical abstraction. After 1958 he began to use metal wires grouped together and moving freely over plane surfaces, enabling him to create multi-dimensional spaces in which strange effects of dynamism were produced which were previously unknown in abstract art. The field of abstract art has been cultivated by many other excellent Venezuelan artists. Carlos Cruz-Díez has produced some solid work, carefully executed and of remarkable optical refinement, of which his *Fisiocromías* are an example.

The rich variety of Argentine painting in the mid-1960s led Tomas M. Messer to wonder why so many excellent artists emigrated to other art centres. Broadly speaking it can be said that the transition from the early Informalism to present-day styles of painting represents an assertion and clarification of positions. This is demonstrated by the Abstract Expressionism of Sarah Grilo and Antonio Fernández Muro. In her sensitivity of expression and colour Sarah Grilo has achieved a degree of maturity that is rare amongst *avant-garde* artists, and the constructive precision of Fernández Muro's work is accompanied by a classical balance that is also rare nowadays. The first neo-figuratives—Deira, de la Vega, Macció, Luis Felipe Noé, Antonio Seguí—have followed a variety of paths. Seguí enlivens his themes with a mixture of humour and drama but avoids pictorial literature. Despite the individuality of its members the Geometrics constitute one of the most coherent groups. Vidal, Brizzi, McEntyre, Silva and the "generative painting" concept invented by them represent an advance on static geometrism. A combination of the mysterious with precision of language, a translation into lines of the energy which animates the world and the vitality which actuates life—generative art uses the idiom of the technological age to which it belongs.

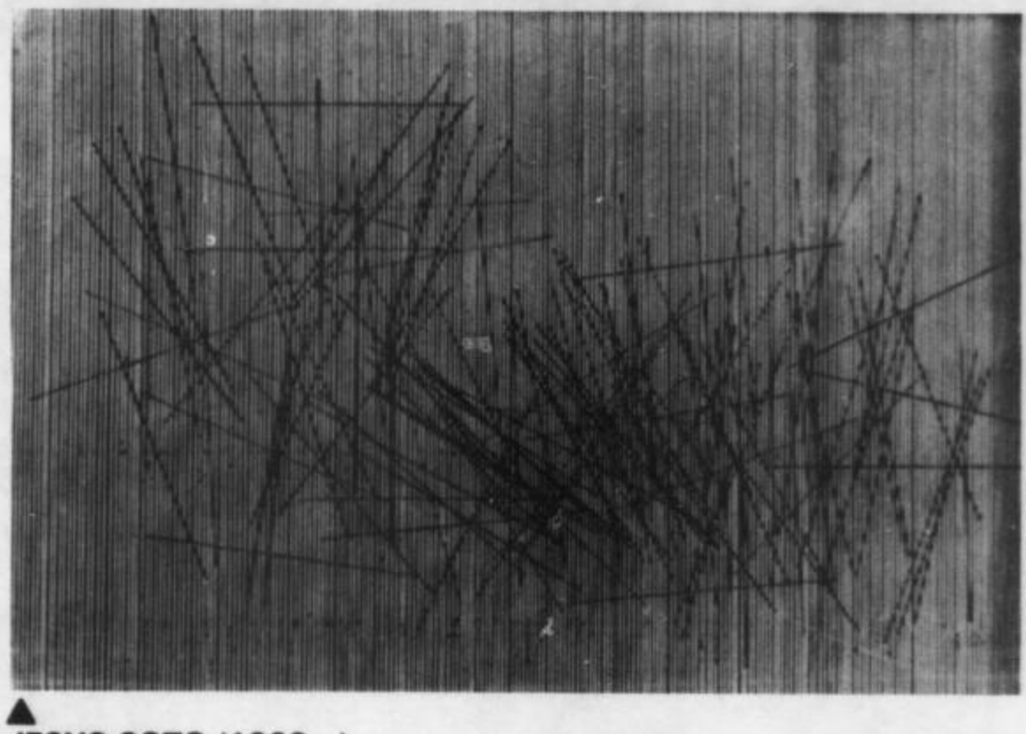
The so-called "Recherche d'Art Visuel" established in Paris in the 1960s and including Gyula Kosice, Hugo Demarco, and Julio Le Parc represents better than any other group the need constructively to break through the plane of traditional pictorial support and the possibility of creating tridimensional works that are rich in optical effects and kinetic values.

The characteristic features of the movement in Peru which followed *indigenismo* were a growing receptiveness to contemporary concepts—from the liquidation of the Paris School to the adoption of the Abstract idiom—together with the use of these concepts by a number of leading artists to express values of an impersonal, mythical, magic character. This was true from the 1960s onwards of Fernando de

Photo © Rojas-Mix, Paris

▲ **OSWALDO GUAYASAMIN** (1919-).
Hands of Protest. Oil on canvas, 1968.

At one with the Mexican mural painters in his passionate involvement with indigenous culture and sharing their admiration for Pablo Picasso, the Ecuadorian painter Oswaldo Guayasamín is a man firmly rooted in the soil and in the people. He is concerned more with space than with history with his dominating views of rugged scenery as seen from Mount Pinchincha to the more reverential vistas from the valley of Quito. Rather than with its past he is concerned with the soul of Ecuador which he lays bare to us in his "Hands" series of paintings.



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▲ **JESUS SOTO** (1923-).
Vibration (the swimming-pool). Wood and plastic, 1962.

The Venezuelan artist Jesús Soto maintains that true abstraction can only be achieved through movement—not mechanical movement but the potential movement created by the observer when he moves, the vibration created by the repetition of shapes, the superposition of geometrical objects on a striated background, the reverberation of two moiré screens. Soto's aim is to free himself completely from the restraints of figurative art.

CARLOS CRUZ-DIEZ (1923-).
Fisiochromia. Mixed technique, 1967.

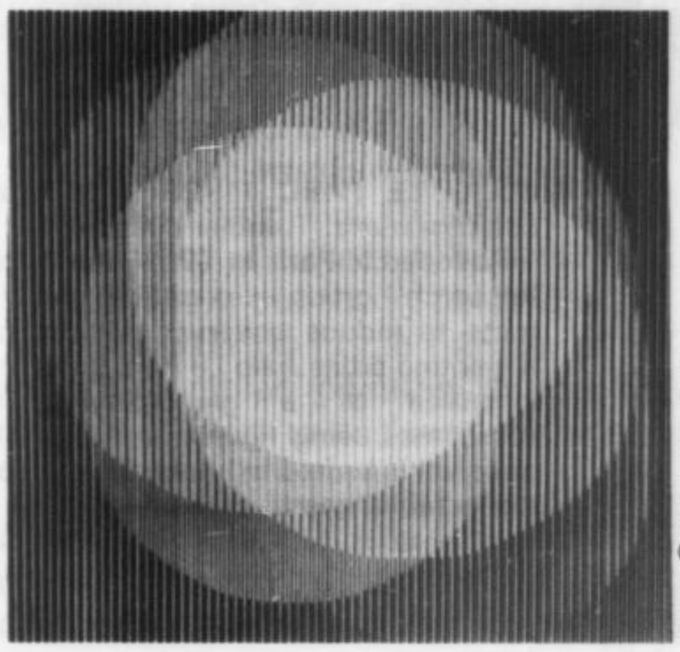
With his "Fisiochromia", the Venezuelan artist Carlos Cruz-Díez reveals his "additive colour" theory. Using fine transparent or opaque strips at regular intervals, he uses red, green, black and white, causing an interaction between these colours which act on the observer's retina creating the full range of the chromatic spectrum. A combination of the movement of light and of the observer provides an infinite ▼ variety of effects.

Szyszlo, who learned to express a Peruvian content, compounded of formal allusions and chromatic qualities, in purely abstract language.

Brazilian painting also adopted contemporary language and outgrew the influence of the Paris School in the 1950s and especially in the 1960s when the European influence was replaced by that of North America. Ibere Camargo, Arcanio Ianelli—true to an intense European-style Formalism—Ivan Serpa and Manabu Mabe are among the exponents of the new painting in this period. The scene became richer and more varied towards the end of the 1960s and after. After 1970 the new Brazilian painting embraced all contemporary forms of expression.

In Mexico the generation of artists who came after Rufino Tamayo—who was responsible for the break with revolutionary muralism—are those who have incorporated the new trends into their painting. The breakthrough was made in the 1950s by a group of young artists including Manuel Felguérez, Vicente Rojo, Pedro Coronel, Lilia Carrillo, Alberto Gironella, Vlady and José Luis Cuevas, who welcomed the foreign ideas. Gifted and receptive, they followed a variety of paths, introducing a range of concepts which now form the basis of Mexican art.

From an early stage José Luis Cuevas displayed an incisive mastery, free of illusions, in the portrayal of an entire series ▶



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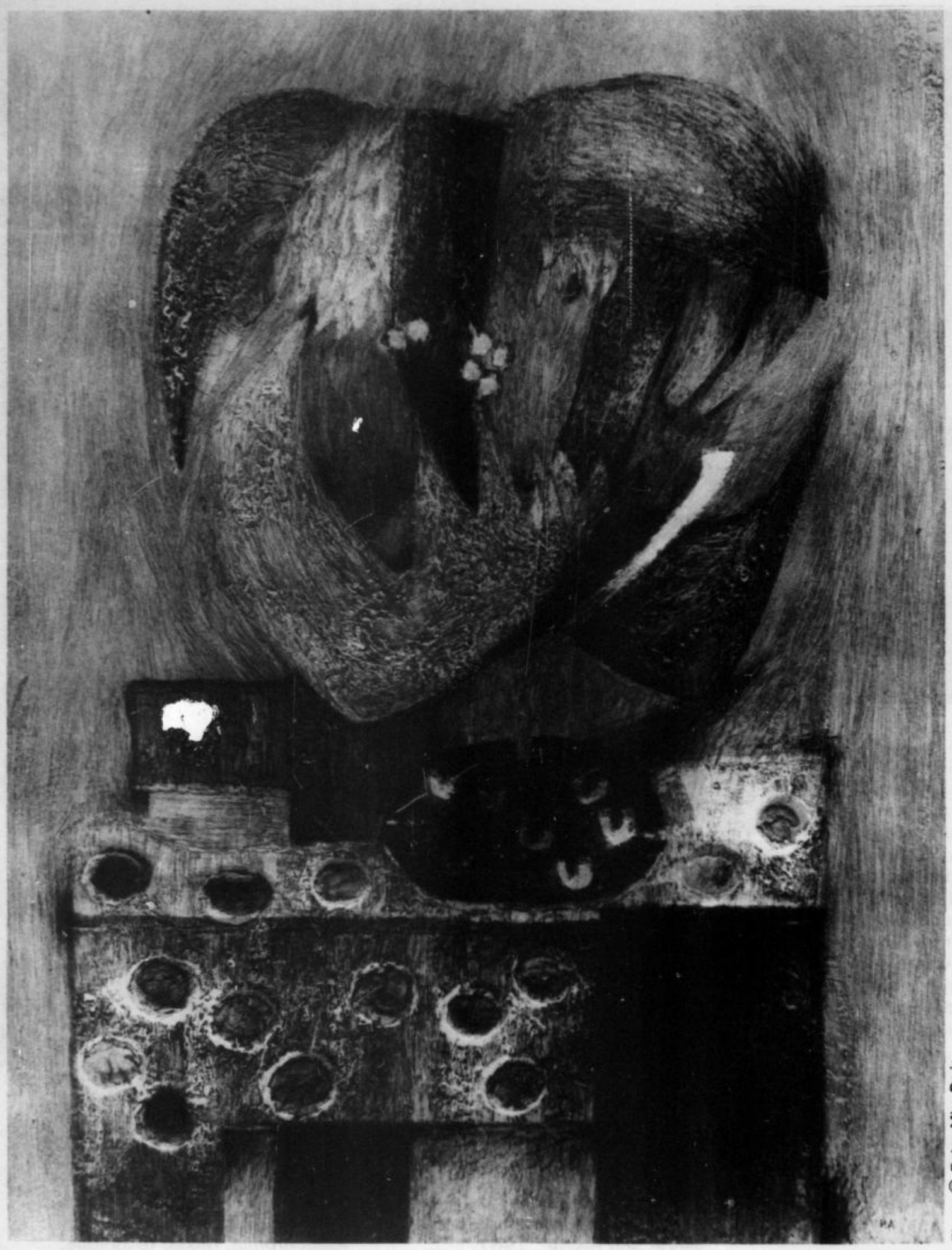

Photo © Rojas-Mix, Paris

◀**FERNANDO DE SZYSZLO** (1925-).
House No.8. Engraving, 1975.

"Indigenism" (the integration of indigenous culture) is a growing trend in the Andean region. Initiated in Peru by José Sabogal and Julia Codesido, it has evolved with Szyszlo into what might be termed "abstract indigenism". His work, which draws its inspiration from literature, aims to recover and revive traditional myths or, if necessary, invent them.

Photo © Jean-Louis Gleyze, Paris

▲
JUAN CARLOS LANGLOIS (1926-).
Miguel Angel Asturias. Indian ink on paper, 1981, in the *Homage* series.

Léopold Sédar Senghor described the work of the Argentine artist Juan Carlos Langlois as "painting-poetry", and pointed out its resemblance to Chinese and pre-Columbian art. Langlois' art is an art of metamorphosis, of the reduction of the image to its basic elements which, in the case of Latin America, are essentially, "bone, root and cloud".

ARMANDO MORALES (1927-).
Two Figures. Oil on canvas, 1970.

The Nicaraguan painter, engraver and cartoonist Armando Morales has lived in New York for many years. He has alternated between figurative and abstract work; in his latest stage—which has most enhanced his name as a painter—his work has taken a "metaphysical" or "visionary" turn with representations of large figures, generally of female nudes, against dark backgrounds or dark blue skies with cotton-wool clouds.
▼

Photo © Rojas-Mix, Paris

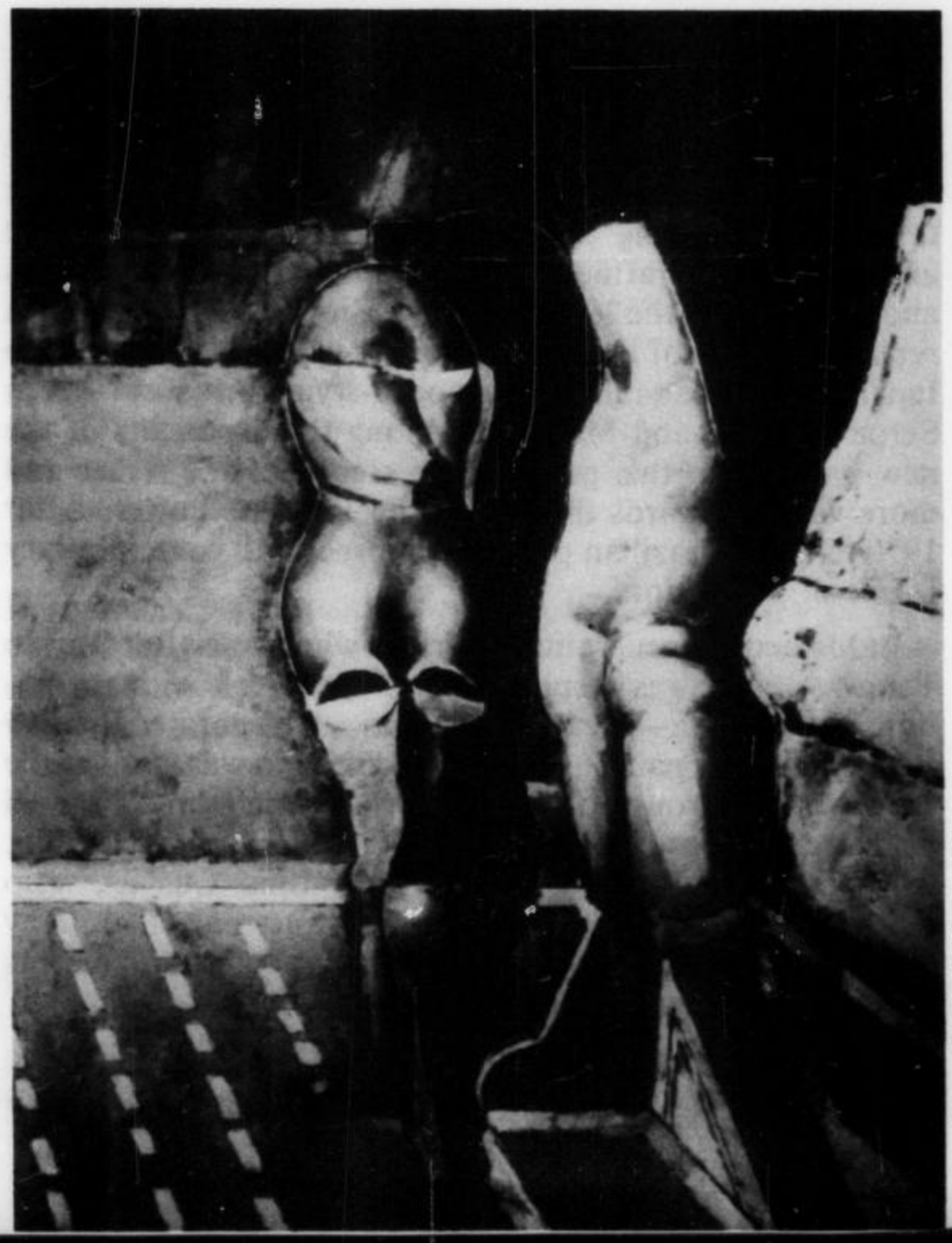

Photo © Damián Bayón, Paris

▲ **JULIO LE PARC** (1928-). *Knocking the Establishment*. Tumbler-dolls, 1968.

Founded in Paris in 1960, the "Visual Arts Research" group uses optical and kinetic effects to induce observer participation. The Argentine artist Julio Le Parc gives the added incentive of a game-playing element, sometimes using figurative images. Here the observer is invited to knock down people from the establishment, presented in the form of tumbler-dolls.

Photo © Rojas-Mix, Paris

▲ **ENRIQUE ZANARTU** (1920-).
The Beachcomber. Oil on canvas, c.1962.
The Chilean Enrique Zañartu is a surrealist rather than an abstract painter since the figures that fill his canvases are symbols. He makes play of ambiguity in that shapes are people and splashes of colour or shading indicate the landscape. He juggles with the logic of the "real" and the logic of "form". Like the "Beachcomber" pacing the shore, all is illusion.

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▲ **FERNANDO BOTERO** (1932-).
The Horseman. Bronze, 1981-1982.
By drawing on the heritage of popular art and devoting his work to the study of daily life, the Colombian artist Fernando Botero has established his own distinctive identity of style. Botero's world is an impressive, more than life-size world. Everything is large-scale, from his view of the history of art to the tablecloths and watermelons of his still-lifes. With his "over-sized images he has taken possession of the world and made it Colombian".

▶ of tragi-comical characters. The penetrating, sarcastic sensitivity of his pen, pencil and ink rapidly placed him in the front rank of his generation. Shortly afterwards some evolved towards geometricism. Outstanding amongst them is Manuel Felguérez. His sound theoretical basis, technical precision and advanced investigations—he is at present working with computers—place this extremely sensitive artist amongst the most important of his generation in Latin America.

Others, such as Francisco Toledo and Alberto Gironella are, to quote the historian and critic Jorge Alberto Manrique, "establishing a special relationship with objects and the living world that is both critical and oneiric". Although they do not possess the instantaneous permeability of the Argentine artists, the young Mexicans have a capacity for selective assimilation and are capable of achieving a high degree of maturity. They, too, occupy an outstanding place in Latin American painting.

The generation immediately following that of Roberto Matta in Chile includes two outstanding artists, Nemesio Antuñez, who in recent years has been expressing on canvas his concern for anonymous humanity, and Enrique Zañartu, whose work is an investigation of the deeper, darker realities.

The founder and most distinguished representative of contemporary painting in Colombia is Alejandro Obregón. His work draws its sustenance from the very sap of the Latin American tropics. It radiates energy and creates its own myths and images. Fernando Botero, who is internationally known for his stylistic concept of the circular form carried to the utmost extremes, is a complex artist. He is both a realist and a satirist. He takes an ironic delight in reality, which he magnifies for sarcastic purposes. He is more subtle and ambiguous than the satisfied collectors of his works are aware. The elegance, compassion, not to say tenderness, of his images are only lightly suggested in the fullness of his forms. The most recent Colombian painting reflects the wealth of talent and variety of ideas to be found in the new generation.

One of the most surprising developments in terms of scope and quality is that recently achieved by painting in Bolivia. The pioneers of contemporary painting in that country in-▶

For readers' further information we list below the names of some contemporary Latin American artists whose works, to our great regret, we have been unable to discuss in this issue; the list, of course, is not exhaustive.

Argentina
Aizenberg, Roberto
Bonevardi, Marcelo
Chab, Víctor
Kemble, Kenneth
Krasno, Rodolfo
Ocampo, Miguel
Peluffo, Marta
Pucciarelli
Sobrino, Francisco
Testa, Clorindo
Tomasello, Luis

Bolivia
Baptista, Carmen
da Silva, Alfredo
Ugalde, Gastón
Valcárcel, Roberto

Brazil
Amaral, Antonio Henrique
Dacosta, Milton
Djanira
Netto, Gontran
Piza, Arthur Luiz
dos Prazeres, Heitor
de Resende Carvalho, Flavio
da Veiga Guinard, Alberto
Volpi, Alfredo

Chile
Balmes, José
Bonati, Eduardo
Bru, Roser
Cienfuegos, Gonzalo
Dávila, Juan D.
Dittborn, Eugenio
Irarrázaval, Pedro
Lira, Benjamín
Núñez, Guillermo
Opazo, Rodolfo
Téllez, Eugenio
Toral, Mario

Colombia
Cárdenas, Juan
Cárdenas, Santiago
Coronel, Cecilia
Grau, Enrique
Hernández, Manuel
Rayo, Omar
Rojas Herazo, Héctor
del Villar, Hernando

Costa Rica
Carballo, Fernando

Cuba
Bermúdez, Cundo
Carreño, Mario
Herrera Zapata, Julio
Martínez, Raúl
Rodríguez, Mariano

Dominican Republic
Cestero, José

Ecuador
Almeida, Gilberto
Aráuz, Carlos
Bueno, Mauricio
Cifuentes, Hugo
Jácome, Ramiro
Molinari, Luis
Pavón, Germán
Ricaurte, León
Svistoonoff, Nicolás

El Salvador
Solís, Armando

Guatemala
Aldana, Díaz
Cabrera, Roberto
Recino
Rojas, Elmer

Honduras
Ruiz Matute, M.A.

Mexico
Coronel, Pedro
Coronel, Rafael
Corzas, Francisco
Martínez, Ricardo
Nissen, Brian
Rubalcava, Cristina
Reyes, Aurora
Van Gunten, Roger

Panama
Alvarado, Antonio
Dutary, Alberto

Paraguay
Careaga, Enrique
Colombino, Carlos
Rolandi, Carlos

Peru
Braun, Herman
Tsuchiya, Tilsa

Uruguay
Broglia, Enrique
Cabrera, Germán
Solari, Luis Antonio

Venezuela
Borges, Jacobo
Carreño, Omar
Colmenares, Asdrúbal
Guinand, Edgard
Hung, Francisco
Hurtado, Angel
Lucena, Víctor
Manaure, Mateo
Navarro, Pascual
Otero, Alejandro
Palacios, Alirio
Poleo, Héctor
Quilici, Pancho
Sánchez, Edgar
Valera, Víctor

▶ clude artists like Maria Luisa Pacheco, who preserves her inner Andean soul in abstract form in New York, and Gil Imaná. Amongst the uncompromising cultivators of abstraction, mention should be made of Alfredo La Placa, Alfredo Da Silva and Maria Esther Ballivían. Enrique Arnal is the most gifted and brilliant. Social protest, the quest for pictorial quality for its own sake, abstract landscape and intimism also have their adepts—Valcárcel, Herminio Forno, Inés Córdoba, Gustavo Madeiros, Chela Rodó, among others. New generations of artists are emerging not only in La Paz but also in other parts of the country.

The early success of the Guatemalan artist Rodolfo Abularach has recently been confirmed at the Latin American and international levels. He is extraordinarily talented and prolific. His search for a style and his incursion into pre-Columbian art in the manner of Rufino Tamayo and Mérida came to an end during his stay in New York at the beginning of the 1960s.

The Nicaraguan Armando Morales is one of the foremost Latin American painters. Born in 1927 and therefore formed amongst the trends and "isms" of contemporary art, he reflects in his work a resolute independence of expression, uninfluenced by any *avant-garde* trends and indifferent to fashion. Nevertheless his work is fully contemporary and purely pictorial.

The predominance of trends which originated in the world centres of Western art has led some critics to deny the existence of Latin American painting in the strict sense. I believe on the contrary that the use of an international system does not necessarily exclude creative originality—which in the case of Latin America is essentially hybrid. But what, then, is the position, the contribution, the distinguishing feature, of Latin American painting?

When trying to answer this question one must above all avoid making false dogmatic statements of the kind one still currently hears, and be prepared to accept a pluralistic reply corresponding to the cultural reality of Latin America. Like the vast region extending from Mexico to Cape Horn, this plurality must perforce include elements that are recognizable as specific or significant. Some of our art critics, and some prejudiced, naive people abroad, would attribute those elements exclusively to original or indigenous values. In fact they should be attributed to all those values resulting from international exchanges which have taken root in our soil. Hybridization is Latin America's vocation, and no living language is foreign to it.

■ **Carlos Rodríguez Saavedra**

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Latin America in its Literature, edited by César Fernández Moreno.

Latin America in its Architecture, edited by Roberto Segré.

Latin America in its Art, edited by Damián Bayón (Forthcoming).

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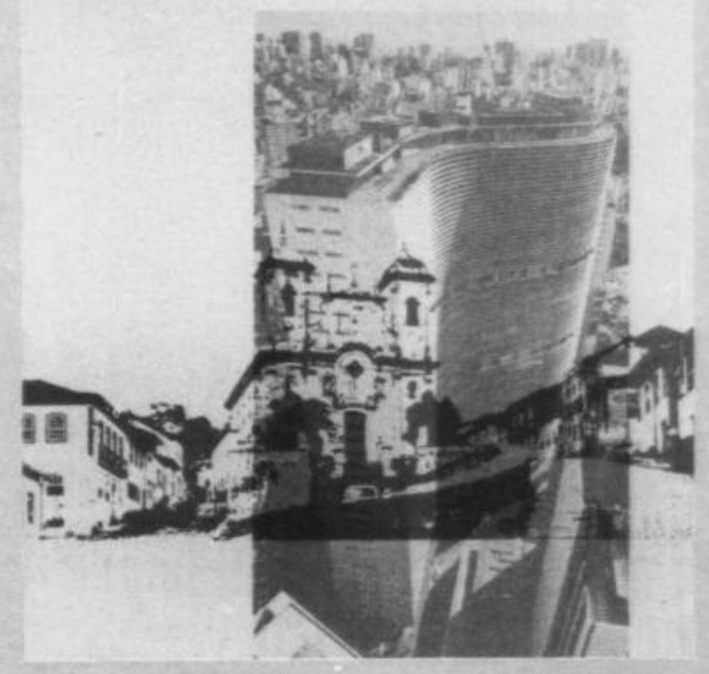
Conversations with ten leading architects

Damián Bayón

Paolo Gasparini

The changing shape of Latin American architecture



Brings together a series of ten interviews with important architects from ten different Latin American countries which were recorded by Damián Bayón, and over 200 photographs taken specifically for the book by Paolo Gasparini. Produced under the auspices of Unesco, and originally published in Spanish in collaboration with Unesco, the English-language edition is published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

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Photo © Peter Frey, Paris

With a conception of painting that is neither academic nor *avant-garde,* their choice of themes drawn from daily life, and because they are generally self-taught and there is a certain superficial ingenuousness in the execution of their paintings, contemporary Latin American artists have often found their works classified as "naive" art. In spite of their originality and intrinsic value and their relatively recent appearance in private art collections, their paintings are rarely handled by the major art dealers, but are to be found on sale in market-places and on the street. Above, Brazilian cotton plantation scene (1973) by Neuza Leodora.